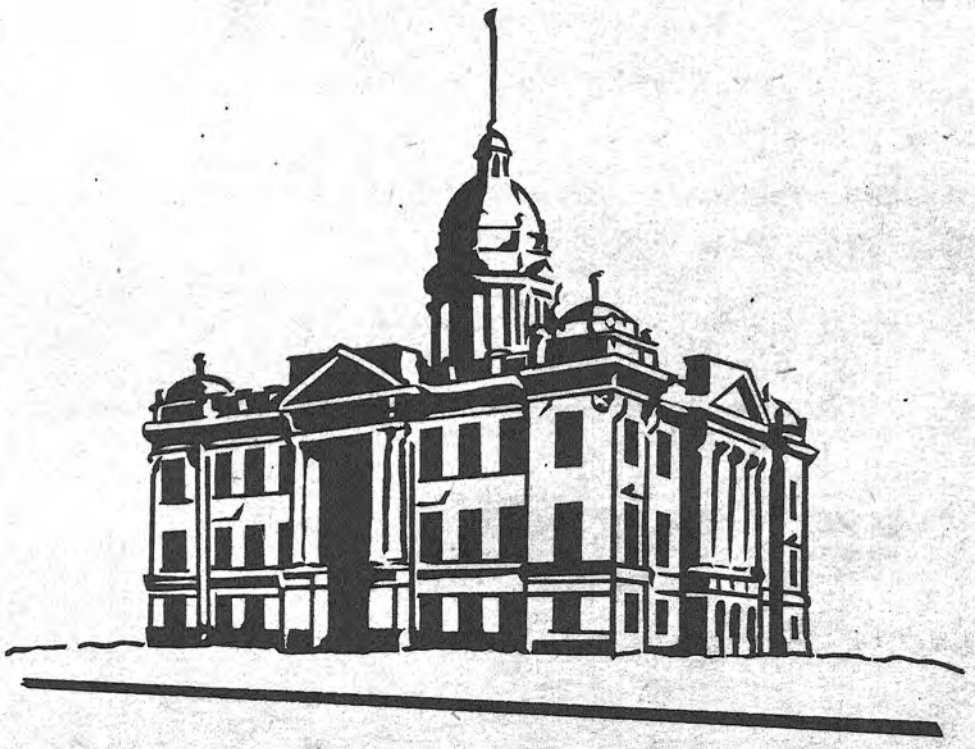
CRAWFORD COUNTY HISTORY



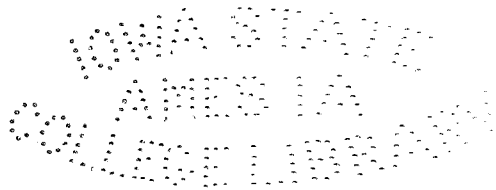
IOWA WRITERS PROJECT W.P.A.

CRAWFORD COUNTY HISTORY

IOWA

Compiled by Workers of the
Writers' Program of the
Work Projects Administration
In the State of Iowa

Jessie M. Parker,
State Superintendent of Public Instruction,
State-wide sponsor of the
Iowa Writers' Program



Sponsored by
County Superintendent of Schools
Crawford County

1941

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John M. Carmody, Administrator

Work Projects Administration

Howard Hunter, Commissioner
Florence Kerr, Assistant Commissioner
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FOREWORD

The democratic way of life, which means so much to every American citizen, can nowhere be seen more clearly by the pupil than in the story of his own county. The pioneers came to the unchartered prairies to wrest from the wilderness a home and a livelihood. Singly and in groups they came, each man for himself, in one sense of the phrase, because upon his own courage and initiative depended the greater part of his success. But the growth of the country that would give him wider opportunities in living could be fostered only by the cooperation of one pioneer with another -- by each man lending his mind and strength to his neighbors so that all together they could develop a community. Schools, churches, economic trade gradually flowered from this interdependence that gave both man and community the power to advance along the road of Democracy.

The history of Crawford County is a vital example of the American way of life -- the Democracy way. To make this a more vivid reality to her citizens, the Iowa Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration has written the story of Crawford County from its first days to 1941. The material presented is as authentic as it is American.

F. N. Olry

County Superintendent of Schools

Crawford County

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1941

INTRODUCTION

THE WILDERNESS

Crawford County, with its rolling prairies and hills covered with blue-stem grass pastures, its fertile fields of corn and grain, its well-kept farmsteads, quiet villages, and busy towns, lies in the midway tier of Iowa counties. Its rivers drain into the Missouri River, to the west. Some of the smaller streams have their headwaters in the hills that rise above the wide Missouri valley and form the county's western border. The Boyer River, flowing 30 miles diagonally across the county, receives its biggest tributary, the East Boyer, at Denison, the county seat. The several branches of the Soldier River drain the northwest corner, the area where the hills are highest and most broken; the Nishnabotna drains the southeastern corner; and the headwater branches of the Willow River, the southwestern corner. Along the borders of the streams stretch practically all of the natural timber. Here the Indian teepees preceded the log cabins of the earliest settlers.

Explorer's trails crossed the wilderness that was to be Crawford County long before white men thought of settling there. A man named Bowyer led one of the parties which Pierre Laclede, the founder of St. Louis, sent up the Missouri River toward this region in 1763 to develop a fur trade with the Indians.

Captain Stephen Watts Kearney's daily journal records that he and his expedition crossed what later became Crawford County in July of 1820 and made several encampments. They had set out from Council Bluff (Fort Calhoun), Nebraska, to discover a direct route between that post and Camp Coldwater at the mouth of the Minnesota River. This expeditionary force crossed the Missouri and camped for its first night on the east side of the Bowyer River about a mile above its mouth. They marched up the Bowyer River valley for several days and on July 4 stopped at a spot eight miles beyond the site of Woodbine, probably just within the limits of Crawford County. Here they dined on pork and biscuits and drank mint julep toasts to the memory of their forefathers to celebrate the day. That was doubtless the first Independence Day celebration within the confines of the future Crawford County.

The day after the Fourth, Kearney's party marched on, forded the Bowyer River near the site of Dow City, and then proceeded northward over "very high broken hills with no timber." Kearney was amazed at the extent of open prairie and was convinced that northwestern Iowa could never support more than a thinly scattered population. At that time open

prairie land was thought to be almost worthless. Doubting that overland travel in this section could ever be practicable, Kearney concluded that his expedition had failed.

Indians lived and hunted in the groves of the county for many years, undisturbed by white settlers until the pioneers of Kanesville on the Missouri started to spread out in the unknown land to the east, following the Indians' and trappers' trails. At about the same time the citizens in eastern Iowa heard the call of the wilderness that lay within the confines of their young state, and the boundary of settlement began slowly to move west to meet the line that was already advancing eastward from the Missouri River. These pioneers conquered the wild prairie and gave to their heirs the well ordered Crawford County of 1941.

CHAPTER 1

THE ANCIENT HUNTING GROUND

No one knows exactly how long ago the mound builders lived in Iowa, but the mounds they built for their dead and for their homes are scattered in almost every county in Iowa on high promontories bordering the streams. Many of them, however, have been obscured by grass or trees. Iowa was apparently the western frontier of these people, since none of their mounds are found west of the Missouri River. Who the mound builders were remains a mystery. Some authorities believe that they were the ancestors of the American Indian, while others hold that they were an unrelated people.

Two groups of mounds have been found in Crawford County, both of them along the Boyer* River. One group of nine mounds, found on a plateau above the Boyer about five miles south of Denison, is arranged in a semi-circle about five feet above the ground level. A similar group lies at the mouth of Paradise Creek. The owners of the mounds have opened a few of them and found human remains, indicating that the Crawford County mounds were probably used as burial places.

There were different tribes among the mound builders just as there are among the Indians. The culture of each tribe is indicated by the type of weapons, utensils, and pottery later found in the mounds. The mound builders in Crawford County possibly belong to what is called the Glenwood culture, since mounds of this group are scattered from Monona County to the Missouri State line throughout the Missouri River flood plain.

The length of the gap between the vanishing of the Mound Builders and the coming of the Indians to this region is not recorded in history. The Indians must have hunted over the land for years, however it is unlikely that they had any permanent villages in Crawford County. A site about four miles north of Vail was a frequent Indian camp, and when settlers first came to the section that was later Crawford County, the Sioux had not yet relinquished the area as their hunting ground. Even after the cabins of the white settlers were scattered over the prairie, roving bands of Sioux often returned to their former hunting land along the Boyer River. It was a bitter experience for them to see white men trapping the otter and fishing in the streams that had belonged to them and to their forefathers.

* The spelling took this form at a very early date.

Much of the trouble between white men and Indians arose from the Indian's conception of property. To him the earth was a common mother to all. Land and water were as free as air and light. The Indian could not understand why a white man should want to call a few acres his own and keep others from using it.

Settlers in western Iowa were annoyed by the frequent visits of the homesick Indians who begged for food from their scanty supplies. The Indians came back to Crawford County to hunt in bands of thirty to fifty families. Sometimes, tired of their meat diet, they stopped at settlers' cabins to beg or to trade furs for cornmeal, sugar, or tobacco.

At first the Indians gave the settlers no real trouble, but they grew increasingly bitter as more settlers came and freedom of movement in the region once theirs was more and more denied to them.

In the fall of 1851 Indian raids alarmed the handful of settlers at Dowville and at Mason's Grove. Soon after James Butler had come to Union Township a band of Sioux plundered the neighborhood cabins. When Mrs. McCall, Butler's mother-in-law, tried to defend their possessions the Indians slapped her and took what they wanted. At the Carpenter place at Lost Grove, the raiders found the door closed against them. But the 12 raiding Indians were too many for the two defenders. They broke down the door and took many articles, among them a feather bed. Outside, they ripped open the feather bed, scattered the feathers to the wind, and carried off the empty tick.

Indian trouble began in earnest two years later. The settlers, isolated from one another in the groves along the streams, had paid little heed to visiting trappers who had warned them that the Indians were becoming hostile. Shortly afterward, to their consternation, a band of Sioux came and camped two miles south of Dowville. They robbed nearly all of the cabins, and stole Jim Butler's pony. About twenty armed settlers gathered during the night and set out for the Indian camp where the Sioux were roasting the pigs and chickens they had helped themselves to during the day. W. H. Jordan took charge and advised the men to shoot their guns simultaneously, not only to surprise the Indians but also to make a noise that would warn other settlers. The Sioux, hearing this volley, broke camp unknown to the white men and fled toward Mason's Grove. The settlers did not wish to attack at night and made camp. When they found the Indians gone, they tracked the band by the hoofprints of James Butler's pony. They found that the Indians had plundered homes at Mason's Grove and fled. The posse pursued them as far as Des Moines before Butler finally got his pony back by bribing one of the Indians to help him entice it away from the Indian camp.

Sometimes the early settlers met Indians on their overland trips to market. Cornelius Dunham, the county's first settler, took a boatload of dressed cattle to St. Louis about 1860, but the river froze and he had to return overland. Dunham bought a pony and started back, sleeping out in the woods when it was necessary. He met a band of Indians and bought a pair of moccasins from them. Some time later he encountered another band, unfriendly to the first. Immediately they noticed his moccasins and recognized the handiwork of their enemy. Greatly excited, they pointed to the moccasins with angry gesticulations. Dunham, very calmly -- though he must have been quite afraid -- pulled the moccasins off and handed them to the leader, who at once tore them to shreds. The Indians then presented Dunham with another pair, made by their own tribesmen. This hostility among the Indians themselves continued even after they had been banished to various reservations. When small groups returning to their former hunting grounds met, there was usually trouble.

In late August, 1862, a dozen fine horses were missed in Crawford County, and a band of Indians who were wandering from the Redwood and Yellow Medicine Agencies to the north were blamed for it. A posse of 15 well-armed men was organized to pursue them and recover the horses. After a day and a half of following their trail, the posse caught up with them. The Indians, feeling safe, had stopped for a noon rest and a meal near the mouth of Waterman Creek not far from Primghar. The posse, although they were outnumbered almost two to one, decided to attack at once. The Indians, caught unaware, leaped for their guns and returned the fire, but the heavy firing of the posse drove them to their horses and they fled. None were killed, but several were wounded and had to be helped to their mounts. By the time the posse had returned to their own hidden horses, the Indians had disappeared in the direction of Minnesota with the stolen animals. The posse returned to Cherokee and joined forces with a squad of soldiers there, but the horses were never recovered.

CHAPTER 2

PRAIRIE SCHOONERS ROLL TO CRAWFORD COUNTY

When Iowa became a state in December, 1846, the Sioux still hunted along trails to the north of the recently relinquished Pottawattamie reservation, land that was to become Crawford County. Many of the younger settlers living in the eastern counties that fringed the Mississippi were feeling crowded and restless and ready to move to new lands in the western part of the State. Now that the Pottawattamie had sold their reservation to the Government, some settlers were already living on the western boundary.

Stories of the richness of the land that lay between the settled part of the State, and the scattered homes of the few settlers along the Missouri River, were seeping into the eastern towns and villages. Settlement was definitely moving west.

Among the many men looking west from the eastern counties was Cornelius Dunham, a stock farmer of Jackson County, and later the first settler of Crawford County. Dunham was well established on his farm near Maquoketa, Iowa, and raised so many hogs that he had been nicknamed "Hog" Dunham. He had come to Iowa in the 1840's from Massachusetts, when there seemed to be plenty of room in Jackson County. But with sons growing up, he needed more land.

Hog-raising and butchering were both hard work in the 1840's. There were no sleek, fat swine in neatly fenced yards. The hogs ran wild in the woods and rooted for most of their food. They had to be found before they could be taken to market, and each hog had to be examined to be sure it had the farmer's own individual notch in its ear. To get hold of one hog took a long time. Once Anson Wilson, an early settler in Jackson County, got hungry for pork. Since every farmer did not raise hogs, he and a neighbor drove to Dunham's.

Dunham mounted his old pony, Salem, and rode through the woods to find his hogs, which came only at his call. Before he left, he concealed the two men in some bushes and told them he would bring the hogs past their hiding place. They hid for about an hour before they heard Dunham, calling and riding toward them through the woods. He was followed by a swarm of hogs, one of which he pointed out to the men as he passed. A minute later that pig, shot through the eye, toppled over, and the visitors hauled him into the bushes before the others knew what had happened. Dunham dressed it and gave them half of it.

When gold was discovered in California in 1848, and thousands of west-bound travelers crossed Iowa, Dunham decided to settle on some of the Iowa land that skirted the gold route. His sons and stepsons were ready to farm for themselves and land was already hard to get in Jackson County. Dunham's trip to Crawford County was similar to those of hundreds of other pioneers. In the spring of 1849 he set out in a prairie schooner, taking along his oldest daughter, Sophronia, to do the cooking, Franklin Prentice to build a cabin for him and look after his stock, and Reuben Blake to herd his cattle and hogs along the trail.

There is no record of that trip but one can well imagine it. Oxen pulled the prairie schooner through miles of grass trails unsettled except for an occasional cabin with a friendly curl of smoke issuing from the chimney. The two little Prentice boys sat on the seat beside the driver, and perhaps now and then held the reins. Behind the wagon plodded the cattle and the hogs which Reuben Blake urged on, hour after hour. Suddenly they came upon Cedar Rapids, as the oxen hauled the schooner over the brow of a hill.

As the group stopped to look at the brick and frame buildings of the town in the valley below them, the oxen nibbled a flower or two, browsing as they rested. They crossed the river on the ferry, left the friendly town of Cedar Rapids behind and traveled slowly across a country where there were only Indian trails. Now and then they met an Indian or a trapper, but there were few friendly cabins where the women could sleep at night, and they had only the canvas-covered schooner for shelter. No one knows how long the trip took them. Reuben Blake had to round up a stray cow or hog now and then; and when they made camp at night, the men kept their guns at hand, ready for any marauding wolf or panther. Mrs. Prentice and Sophronia cooked supper on a campfire, roasting prairie chicken or quail, and cooking the food they had brought along.

It was early summer when they reached the grove on the East Boyer River which Dunham chose as his new home. Surrounding the 300-acre grove was the rolling prairie, bright with flowers. Bees were humming through the air toward rich bee trees as Dunham strode around his claim. He had chosen land along one of the rare timbered sections of the prairie, where grew black walnuts, burr and black oaks, hickories, elms, and cottonwoods. Before he, his daughter, and Reuben Blake returned to Jackson County to tend and harvest their planted crops, settle up business affairs, and bring back the family, Prentice was felling logs for the cabin and had an enclosure made for the stock.

He built the cabin strong and sturdy. The door was a single walnut slab, four inches thick, and hung with hewn

wooden hinges. He was constantly busy, caring for stock, shooting deer and wild fowl for food, and doing the endless odd jobs that had to be done. Wild grapes were ripe on the vines that climbed to the tree tops, the hickory nuts and walnuts were falling, and the sumac was red before Dunham and his family got back. Prentice had expected their return sooner, and he was getting ready to leave his wife alone and undertake a long and dangerous trip on foot to Council Bluffs when they came. The Dunham family soon moved from the crowded schooner and wagon into the comfortable cabin. The stock was safe except for a few hogs that escaped and ran wild.

One of the things that Dunham brought with him was a plow that in 1941 would seem cumbersome and heavy. It had huge wheels attached in front and was lifted by a powerful lever, but Dunham could hitch eight or ten yoke of oxen to it and turn over a good deal of ground for that day.

Crawford was one of the counties near Pottawattamie County which received many of the Mormons who disagreed with some of the tenets of that church and left Kanesville (Council Bluffs) to push eastward into the prairie wilds. The first of these to come was Jesse Mason, known as a mighty hunter. He had visited the Boyer valley region in 1848, but it seemed so far away from all settlements that he had returned to Kanesville.

In June 1850, Mason and his family started out in an ox-drawn schooner and followed the divide between Mosquito and Pigeon creeks until they reached the site of Denison. Here they built a bridge on which to cross the Boyer; it was washed away and they built another. They traveled on until they reached a beautiful virgin forest, 2,000 acres in extent, on the east side of the Boyer about six miles as the crow would fly from Dunham's. Mason was soon joined by Noah V. and George J. Johnson, Calvin Horr, and the Levi Skinner family, fellow Mormons. Before long this community was known as Mason's Grove. Jesse Mason's cabin, on the main route to Council Bluffs, soon became the stopping place of all who were seeking new homes in that part of Western Iowa. Mason was like a father to the new settlers and to all the families who were passing his way. He sheltered them, fed them, and stabled their teams.

The settlement around Mason's home thrived. Before five years had passed there was a score of cabins in the grove and a friendly intermingling of settlers from Ohio and the East who had joined the Mormons. A Mormon elder, Thomas Dobson, joined the group in 1851, and some of the eastern settlers accepted the Mormon religion although no church services were held. Two years later Elder Dobson performed three marriage services, the first in the county, binding

George J. Johnson and Elizabeth Ann Mason, Noah V. Johnson and Jane Mason, and Calvin Horr and Elizabeth Mowery.

At about this time the first Government survey was made. Frank Rudd, a Mormon elder, brought his family to Lower North Grove, not far from the site of Dow City. Rudd, a hunter and trapper, did not have to wait long for a neighbor. A few months later, in March 1851, James M. Butler and his family came to Upper North Grove, and within a few years Edmund Howorth and his sons and John Rudd, John Vore, Elder William H. Jordan, and Benjamin Gallena had settled in and around the groves. By 1855 the cabins of the Thurstons, the Carpenters, and the Strattons could be seen among the trees of Lost Grove. Carpenter ran a broom factory.

Shortly after Benjamin Dobson had erected the first saw and grist mill in the county at Mason's Grove in June 1854, Rufus Richardson, E. W. Fowler, B. F. Wicks, and Clark Winans joined the group at Mason's Grove. Chance brought Wicks and Winans to the county. They had met Ambrose Richardson when they stopped at Panora, Iowa, in 1854 and he had suggested that they try Crawford County, which had just been attached to Shelby County for civil government. Winans and Wicks rode up the Boyer Valley to investigate, but they returned to their families without making a decision. When they started out the next day and arrived at a fork in the road, Wicks, in the lead, called, "Which way?" Winans then yelled back, "Set a stick up straight at the forks in the road. Whichever way it falls we'll go." It fell toward Crawford County. Two days later they reached Dunham's Grove and the next day, September 1, 1854, were in Mason's Grove.

The unnamed land comprising Crawford County was shifted from county to county. In 1837 it was a part of the original Benton County, Wisconsin Territory. In 1846 this area was attached to Polk County for election, revenue, and judicial purposes, and in 1847 it was made a temporary part of Pottawattamie County, then co-extensive with the former Indian reservation. By the time the state government established Crawford as one of 50 new counties in 1851, eight or nine families had built cabins in the groves along the Boyer River. That June the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands of Sioux Indians surrendered their claim to the Spirit Lake country and the western part of the State was open to settlement.

Crawford County, named for William H. Crawford of Virginia (one-time Senator, Minister to France, Secretary of War and Secretary of the Treasury), was attached to Shelby County in 1853 for judicial, civic, and fiscal purposes and the next year was organized as Milford Township of Shelby County.

Most settlers were living in cabins during the winter of 1854 but one of them had for shelter only a sort of pen covered with poles and hay and subsisted on what deer, wild turkey, and prairie chicken he could shoot. After the snows came and packed in his pen, it was sort of an igloo.

One or two settlers were living in even more isolated parts of the county when the winter of 1854-55 set in. In Nishnabotna Township, snow came before Henry Custer could get to the mill at Mason's Grove to have his 12 bushels of buckwheat and a few bushels of corn ground. Fortunately his cabin was finished. His wife ground the buckwheat in her coffee grinder and made hominy of the corn, stinting her family to make the grain last through the winter.

During the winter of 1854, whenever a few settlers got together at each other's cabins or at Dobson's mill, the only one within a radius of 30 miles, talk turned to the possibility of a separation from Shelby County. The people considered it a nuisance to have to travel to the Shelby County seat to pay taxes, and every bachelor hated to think of duplicating John Dobson's famous trip. Dobson had traveled 100 miles to find County Judge Mansel Wicks of Shelby County and procure a license to marry Lucy Winans. Everyone agreed that 100 miles was a long way to go for a marriage license.

With the Government surveys completed, these pioneers were confident that more settlers would be coming. Word of the county's fertility was spreading. The petition for separation from Shelby County was made in 1854 and was granted. The first temporary officers of the county were elected in April, 1855, by 30 settlers who cast their ballots at Nicholas Friend's cabin on Coon Creek in Friend's Grove. W. W. Fowler of Mason's Grove, who kept store goods at his cabin on Newt Brogan's farm, was elected temporary County Judge.

The deep snows of the winter of 1856-57 made the settlers of Mason's Grove glad they lived close together. A snow storm beginning on December 2 lasted three days and buried the county under a three-foot blanket. Some of the isolated settlers were marooned in their houses for several days. A Mr. Didra, who lived about a mile south of Denison, and who had built his cabin on the south slope of a hillside, awoke to find his house completely covered with snow. Even his garret was crammed full of snow. While his family shivered in bed, Didra "dug out." He did not dare to build a fire for fear the heat would melt the snow in the garret and a flood would come tumbling down. Outside, he found all but one of his oxen milling around in the snow. After digging down as far as he safely could for the missing cow, he took the handle of a pitchfork and prodded the snow at the bottom of the hole, but he could reach neither the bottom

nor the ox. Later, he knocked the gable boards off his house, cleaned the snow out of the attic, and built a fire to thaw out his family.

At Denison, on the night of this storm, Jacob Seagrave, a guest at the tavern, called on a friend about a block away. When he had not returned at a late hour, the proprietor and other guests grew alarmed. One of them made his way to the house where the young man had gone, and found that he had left to return to the tavern. Seagrave did not get back that night, although the guests wore out the hotel's supply of tin pans, beating them in the hope he would hear the noise above the roar of the storm and find his way back. They tied all of the landlord's bedcords together and made a long rope to circle the hotel outside, but they still missed him. The next morning the proprietor's son saw Seagrave's boots sticking out of a drift not far from the tavern and pulled him out. His feet were frozen so badly that Denison and Jason Whitinger walked to Council Bluffs to get a doctor for him. Two weeks later the two men returned to Denison with a Major Grant, a retired army physician. Seagrave suffered the loss of both feet but he lived.

The cattle, allowed to run loose during the three-day storm, strayed to the grove just outside of Denison and the owners had to dig a path to them to bring them home. A herd of 75 deer remained in this grove all winter. A thaw early in January was followed by a freeze that glazed the snow with ice. The deer, breaking through the glaze and floundering in the deep snow, were easy prey for the light-footed wolves, which slaughtered many of them. During the bitter cold many deer and elk starved. Sometimes, years later, settlers would find a blanched heap of deer or elk bones in a secluded valley where a herd had perished, either buried or starved to death in the snow.

In Union Township, another center of early settlement, two men named Dow and Comfort, in great need of flour, put sacks of buckwheat on a hand sled and hauled them to the ridge road. From there a neighbor, John Vore, took them to Dobson's mill. The bottom roads were under snow drifts all winter long. In March, 1857, the snow was still deep but supplies were running so low that Comfort again took his hand sled, made and attached a long tongue, then hitched his horse to it and drove to Council Bluffs for groceries. The trip took him more than a week.

The hardships of pioneer life forced many of the settlers to consider pulling up stakes and going back to a safer part of the United States, but Benjamin Dobson had faith in the new country and laid out a town on the farm land of John and Lucy Winans Dobson. Dobson's newly platted settlement had settlers but no buildings, while Denison had

a store, a hotel, and a few cabins, but scarcely any settlers. By the spring of 1857 Dobson's town had a post office, named Boyer Valley, with Dobson as postmaster. The town was called Bloomington, Mason's Grove, and Mason City in turn, but all these names were discarded because there were too many other towns of similar names. The townspeople then tried Beloit, but there were already several Beloit's. Finally someone suggested changing the "B" to "D", and the town became Deloit.

In spite of the fact that Indian scares had made some people in the county give up their homesteads and leave, Deloit decided to hold a county-wide Fourth of July celebration in 1857. This was the first in the organized county. After the cost of a flag had been taken from the $14.70 collected for the affair, the rest of the money was turned over to the women, who used it to prepare a dinner for all who attended. When young and old were gathered around the feast which the women had spread on long tables set under the trees, several of the settlers played stirring airs on their fifes and drums and everyone forgot for a time the privations and dangers of frontier life.

The third section of the county to be settled early was in Union Township. Edmund Howorth paid the first taxes and had the first land deed in 1853. The first group of settlers had come to this area, however, shortly after Jesse Mason and his family arrived at Mason's Grove in 1849. S. E. Dow was on his way from New Hampshire to California when he gave up the attempt at Council Bluffs and turned back.

Attracted by the fertility of the Boyer River valley, he bought 1,860 acres in Crawford County in 1854. The next year he hired men to mow the prairie grass, never before cut, on the site of the present Dow City. Here he built what the settlers called a luxurious log cabin. When his wife and daughter joined him in November, fat stock grazed on the prairie surrounding the cabin. He imported a pair of Shorthorn cattle in 1856, and began to breed them, later developing a fine herd.

During the first months, when his wife's loneliness made her want to return to a more settled country, Dow stood in the cabin doorway, pointed to the Boyer River valley, and predicted that soon a railroad would come up the valley, bringing scores of new people. But the settlement remained a farming community for more than a dozen years.

The earliest pioneer activities flowed around these three settlements, Denison, Deloit, and Dow City. Cabins could be found in most of the groves along the streams: Oak Grove, Coon Grove, Buck Grove, and others. During the first half dozen years most of the settlers had to make the 80-

mile trip to Kanesville for their own supplies. W. W. Fowler kept a small store at Denison, but the storekeepers themselves had to make the long trip to Kanesville, the Mormon town, for their goods.

The early settler in Crawford County had to depend upon himself for everything. But the streams were full of fish; berries and nuts were plentiful; and prairie chicken and quail were abundant. After the first year the garden usually provided potatoes, onions, squash, and pumpkins. There was wild honey in the bee trees and sugar could be boiled from the sap of the maples. Deer were still numerous and there were some elk.

In the winter time flitches of bacon and rings of dried pumpkin hung from the rafters of the cabin, and the powder horn and rifle were kept on the wall within easy reach. When sugar was obtainable grapes, strawberries, cherries, raspberries, gooseberries, and plums were put up. On the coldest winter nights, all the coon and otter-skin robes that the family owned were spread on top of the beds in the rafter room to keep the children warm.

Getting ready for winter was a big job. Much time was spent in procuring simple things like water and wood, for the family might be snowed in for days, miles away from anyone else. Water had to be hauled by the barrelful from the nearest spring until a well could be dug. Trees had to be chopped down for fuel and hauled home. A winter's supply meant many days of hard work. When the flour bin was scraped clean, father loaded a wagon with wheat or corn and traveled from ten to thirty miles to have it ground. When he got to the mill he quite often found a half-dozen ahead of him, and they swapped stories, pitched horseshoes, or fished while waiting their turns. Father would read an old Council Bluffs newspaper at the mill, too, if he was lucky enough to find one. When he got home the whole family and sometimes the neighbors gathered to hear what had happened in Washington during the past months, or to get the local and state news. Farmers came to the mill at Council Bluffs from Cherokee, Smithland, Mapleton, and Ida Grove, and each brought his own news to swap for whatever the others had to tell.

In the fall the hogs that had run wild all summer on the range of unfarmed, unfenced prairie were rounded up, butchered, dressed, and loaded into a wagon. Then father or big brother gee-hawed the oxen and pulled out for Council Bluffs. At night stops were made at some friendly settler's cabin if that was possible. Father was lucky if he got $1.50 a hundred pounds for the hogs. Then he did well if he could get coal oil at $1.40 a gallon; matches at ten cents a box; occasionally wheat flour (a luxury) at nine cents a

pound, and a dress length of calico or woolen cloth from which mother could make a new dress or suit for the tallest child. Old clothes were cut down for Johnny, then Tommy, and then Bill. Each garment had to be worn as long as there was any wear in it. Clothes were bought for warmth and long wear.

Denison, even in the late 1850's, was still a three days' ride from Omaha. There were only five buildings in the town -- an unfinished courthouse, the Denison Hotel with its six unfinished rooms, a one-room school, a store, and a private home with only one room finished. In Burnt Woods, at the top of the divide just above the tiny settlement, was "Fort Purdy", Purdy's strongly built log house. Here the settlers in the vicinity gathered in May of 1857 when a group of families from Ida Grove fled to Mason's Grove on reports that a band of Indians had burned Smithland. This and other Indian troubles had made the settlers fearful and, after a number of unpleasant experiences prior to 1860, many returned to their former homes.

Deloit was too close to Denison to grow rapidly. Mason's Grove and Dobson's Mill lay across the river from Denison and there was no bridge until 1860. In August, 1858, John A. McIntosh, a Mormon elder from Galland's Grove, visited Deloit and held the first church service of the Latter Day Saints at the little Deloit schoolhouse. He was one of the missionaries of the reorganized Mormon Church that took form after the death of Joseph Smith in 1852. Four years later a Mormon Church was organized with 11 charter members and Elder Thomas Dobson as resident pastor. During the 1860's there were nearly a hundred Mormons in and about Deloit, and the little church held services in three different schoolhouses on alternate Sundays until a brick chapel was erected at Deloit in 1866.

A letter telling about the experiences of Mrs. Lillie Newton, who came to Deloit with her parents at about this time, was published in the Denison Review on February 1, 1940. "On April 26, 1864," she wrote, "My parents and myself arrived at Deloit in a covered wagon...If we ran out of candles, we put some grease in a small pan and rolled a strip of cloth in a roll and lighted it. We saved every scrap of paper and rolled them into tapers and used them to light our candles and save matches. Our starch was grated potatoes boiled and strained, and it was fine. When we ran out of soda mother would open the side doors in our kitchen stove and hunt for those pretty white ashes which dissolved in hot water and our biscuits were light and feathery." Mrs. Newton also mentioned their troubles with grasshoppers and prairie fires.

Life in the village offered chiefly the advantages of close neighbors, school, a Latter Day Saints and a Methodist church, and the tiny business district on Main Street at the top of the hill. The town, in 1868 a good trading point for farmers, had two sawmills, two flouring mills, two stores, and several mechanic's shops.

In 1859, the year that the Crawford County courthouse was completed, the first rails of the Cedar Rapids and Missouri Railroad were laid from Cedar Rapids to Boone. But the Civil War halted the work and Crawford County had to wait seven years more for its first railroad.

About the time the War broke out the ladies of Crawford County were very much concerned with the "hoop-breakers" at the county courthouse. A neat fence surrounded the courthouse yard, but the gate was made of round posts, set like ninepins so that stock could not get through. Gentlemen could easily enter between the posts, but ladies' hoop skirts could scarcely squeeze through. The lady frequently had only the choice of climbing the fence to save breaking her hoops. It was often necessary for women to do business at the courthouse, and it took more deft management than most women possessed to get the hoop skirts through the ninepin gate; so the board of supervisors ordered a stile.

The railroad was still several hundred miles away when Crawford County voters gathered in schoolhouses throughout the county to cast a majority vote for Abraham Lincoln. Then several weeks passed before the pony express mail brought back word of Lincoln's election. The great excitement that engulfed the Nation when war was declared scarcely touched Crawford County. Isolated not only from resources for news but also from food supplies, the settlers had their hands full in taming the prairie. At the first war meeting held in August, 1862, two men volunteered for service. Later, in December, 1863, five out of a total of seven volunteers were accepted. They started to Fort Dodge on New Year's Day, 1864 in a sleigh drawn by a four-horse team. The overloaded sleigh broke down and they had to return in 40-below zero weather for another. The two sleigh loads of recruits joined others in Fort Dodge on the fourth day. Two weeks later, in company with still others, they started for Davenport. Twenty men from Crawford County (20 per cent of the voters) served in the war. Before the war was over the county had to borrow seven or eight hundred dollars at 10 per cent interest to provide the $300 war bounty for each Crawford County volunteer.

On the Iowa frontier, the war years brought more concern over the increased Indian hostilities than over the battles to the southward. Rumors of Indian massacres in

Minnesota furrowed new lines of worry on the faces of those responsible for the safety of the communities, and the county commissioners hired scouts to patrol the most exposed areas.

During the early 1860's Indians still came to beg, or to steal if the opportunity presented itself. To the north there were serious Indian depredations, and many settlers feared to leave their families in such an unprotected country, especially since most of the soldiers had been withdrawn to fight in the Civil War. One early settler estimated that about one-fourth of the population had left the county.

The end of the war brought railroad facilities, an influx of settlers, and the establishment of a number of new villages. One of these, Westside, was at first settled almost entirely by Civil War veterans.

The original Crawford County was enlarged by one tier of townships on its western boundary in the fall of 1865, following an election held by Monona and Crawford counties to determine whether the boundary should be changed. Shortly afterwards, most of the townships were surveyed and divided into sections.

CHAPTER 3

FOLLOWING THE PLOW

Cornelius Dunham, the first settler in Crawford County, was a farmer.. He brought with him a drove of hogs, introducing the product that has become one of the county's steadiest sources of income. He shipped the first cattle and hogs to Chicago in 1861. In November he rounded up some 200 hogs and 20 head of cattle and herded them to Marshalltown, the nearest railroad point. A few farmers at this time hauled hogs to Council Bluffs or to Sioux City where they were used locally or shipped down the Missouri River to St. Louis, but most of them waited impatiently for the railroad, then slowly approaching. During the decade before the railroad actually arrived, few newcomers came to the county. Those who were already there struggled along, hauling produce to markets 80 miles away to get what little money they could each year.

Isolated here and there in the southern part of the county, and congregated more closely together in the central part, the first comers settled in the groves along the Boyer River that cut diagonally through the county. The rich bottom land was lush with prairie grass that waved higher than a child's head in many places. When the new farmers arrived in the spring or early summer, often their first thought was to break a bit of ground while the family lived for a few weeks longer in the covered wagon. A few potatoes, a little corn, buckwheat, turnips, onions, and perhaps pumpkins were planted, for there was always that first long, hard winter to plan for.

Often, however, the cabin was the first concern. If there were any neighbors within ten miles, they helped. Trees, often walnuts and oaks, were cut down, trimmed, and hauled to the building site. Then the neighbors came from miles around for the cabin-raising. In the very earliest days there were few to help, but when help was plentiful the log walls of cabins rose swiftly, the notched end of one log dovetailing into the end of another with clocklike regularity. By nightfall the log cabin was snug and tight without benefit of mortar, screws, bolts, bar, or iron. Then the cabin-raisers celebrated with a bountiful supper of whatever was on hand. If the fireplace had been completed, a fire was kindled, and the mistress of the new home unpacked the pots and pans that she had brought from her old home, perhaps in eastern Iowa itself. If the door was not yet ready to hang on its wooden hinges, a blanket or a deer skin was hung across the opening.

The lack of timber made sod houses popular in this part of the county during the first few years. Broad-shared breaking plows were run over wet prairie land to cut the tough fiber into long strips. These strips were cut into short lengths with a spade and laid up like bricks for the walls of houses and stables. Often in the hillier sections sod houses were dug partly into the hillsides, and the chimney stuck right up out of the ground. When the houses were built out on the prairie, however, the roof was thatched with slough hay. Inside the dwelling, the ground was smoothed off for the floor, and skins were hung in the door opening until a trip could be made to the nearest timber to get boards for a door. The sod house era, however, was of short duration.

If the farmer could not hire his prairie broken, the long job took all summer. The farmer plowing alone could break only a few acres the first year. Therefore he usually planted at least his sod corn this first season. After the ground had been plowed, some one with an ax followed the line of every second or third furrow and struck the blade deep into the ground. One of the boys or girls in the family followed, dropped a few kernels of corn into the hole, and then stamped the earth back into place. There was no attempt to cultivate sod corn but the resulting half crop, raised with no expense, provided a large part of the family's diet during the winter.

Most of the farmers in the county hired breaking brigades. Frequently the plowing would be done on a swap basis, the plower agreeing to "break" the land for two bushels of corn a day. Corn then sold for $2 a bushel. The cash cost was from $2.50 to $4.50 a day, depending on whether the plower "found for himself" or boarded with the farmer. There were usually several men, from three to six yoke of oxen, a covered wagon, the plow (with several sets of lays) and a kit of tools that contained a good set of files for sharpening the plowshare. Cooking utensils, a pony and dog completed the usual outfit.

The demand for breaking brigades so exceeded the supply that settlers sometimes had to wait their turns until July. It was no easy job to turn a furrow in the tough, fibrous roots of the prairie grass that had matted for countless years. The plow was usually set to cut and turn a ribbon of the leathery sod from one-and-a-half to two inches deep, but no more plowing could be done after the grass was ready for the scythe. Usually the lay had to be filed after the plow had rounded an 80-acre tract once. Two men, working with three yoke of oxen and a 24-inch plow could break about two acres a day. But though breaking was slow, the soil was rich and the crops were good.

The rush for land that settled the Black Hawk strip and other acquired Indian lands continued, especially after Iowa adopted the Homestead Bill in 1849, and the Government land could be purchased for $1.25 an acre. The 80 acres of land and two-and-a-half acres of timber included in a homestead, however, had to be neatly fenced under the new law.

Timber land had become so scarce by the mid-1850's that the Swedish and German immigrants were forced into the prairie, the only part of the county unoccupied when they arrived. Most of the people who came in the first few decades of settlement were farmers, and there were only three straggling villages, Deloit, Dow City, and Denison. In 1856, when there were 235 persons in the county, 43 of the 63 voters were farmers. By this time 448 acres of land had been improved and corn, wheat, cattle, and hogs were being raised. In that year, 152 cattle and 161 hogs were sold.

Life for the farmers was fraught with danger. Wolves, panthers, and other wild animals were plentiful and sometimes invaded the barnyard to prey upon cattle or swine. During the fall of 1856, Isaac Goodrich stacked hay for his livestock on the west side of the Boyer River where he planned to feed them during the winter. Each day one of his sons made the trip to feed the stock. As one of the boys was entering the grove one day he saw a panther a few steps ahead of him in the path. He stopped, whistled for his dog, and turned to go back. As he turned the big cat sprang and threw him face downward upon the ground. Its claws lacerated his shoulders, but his bull terrier, answering his whistle and his shrieks of pain, flew at the panther's throat and so frightened the animal that it released him and fled. Similar events took place often enough to make the farmers wary as they went about their farm chores, especially after dusk.

Hunting was a necessity rather than a pleasure, and provided meat for the family. Once S. J. Comfort's mother lamented when a herd of 11 deer wandered into the farmyard, and no one was at home to kill one of them. The pioneer farm boy soon learned to trap wild game, and thus provide frequent meat to supplement the cornbread, potatoes, pumpkin, and occasional venison. Few farm wives could pump water from wells in their own yards during the days before the Civil War. Water had to be hauled from the springs along the creeks, and the farmer whose cabin was close to a spring was lucky. Farmers who did not live close to timber had to spend days in hauling wood for the winter.

Food supplies other than what was raised at home had to last for months between trips to Council Bluffs. Some women kept a teacup of flour in reserve when their supply ran low,

so they were never out of flour, but there were times when the family larder was almost bare. There was little warmth at best in the cabins, but many layers of warm clothes helped solve the problem. Chillblains, frost-bitten toes, fingers, ears, and noses were common winter experiences but no one complained. The water in the pail by the wash basin had to be thawed out each winter morning, and sometimes drops of water froze on the dishes as they were wiped. These things were accepted as a part of pioneer life. When the baby fell ill in the night and burned with fever, some one rode many miles for the doctor. Often there was no doctor, and the family could only watch, hope, and pray.

The wide stretches of unoccupied land often enabled prairie fires to get such headlong starts that they could ruin hundreds of acres of crops in a few hours. In the fall when the dense grass and other vegetation was sere and brown, these fires swept across the country, destroying crops, haystacks, fences, and even homes unless the farmer had safeguarded his farm by burning off a wide strip around his field. Meyers, in his History of Crawford County quotes B. F. Wicks, one of the early county officers, concerning his experiences with prairie fires: "Sometimes in the night, my wife or I would see a fire coming in the distance and we knew that our wheat and haystacks would be destroyed unless something was done at once. We would go out and begin to backfire, as we called it. This was done by starting a fire in the dry grass along the fence and whipping it out on the side next the fence, letting it burn from the fence out. If the prairie fire, which was usually driven by a strong wind, was not too near the backfire would have burnt a wide enough space to prevent the oncoming flames from jumping over." Fortunately there was little loss of life. Storms would level the wheat and twist trees right out of the ground. Added to these attacks of nature which the farmers expected, was the constant trouble with the Indians. In fact many settlers counted discretion better than fortitude and returned to the safety of the established communities.

Wicks, described the early days for Old Settlers meetings in the vicinity of Mason's Grove, saying: "We enjoyed life in those days. The settlers would usually get together on Sundays...The men would pitch horseshoes and shoot at a mark, and the women would get up a dinner that could not be beaten, I doubt, even in this enlightened age of the world. There was plenty of meat, both wild and tame, eggs, milk, butter, honey, and wild fruit. The women often met and had a quilting bee and sometimes we met at a neighbor's house in the evening and had a dance, with Ben F. Dobson as fiddler, if I remember rightly. Once in a while a Methodist preacher would come, probably from Council Bluffs, and preach for us a few times. Later Uncle John McIntosh of Galland's Grove, an elder of the Latter Day Saints Church, came to Mason's

Grove, and held meetings near Mason's home. After meeting, Mason would ask all the congregation to go to his house and take dinner, and all who went were well fed on hot biscuit, honey, good coffee, etc."

This section of the county was for many years the most thickly settled and neighbors were near enough for get-togethers. In other parts of the county entertainments at the little log schoolhouses drew the farmers from miles around.

The common interest in farming problems resulted in the organization of the Crawford County Agricultural Society, with a membership of about 400, on December 25, 1859. The first fair, held at the courthouse at Denison, October 1860, was well attended. Farmers were encouraged to improve their stock and crops, and perhaps exhibit at the next fair themselves. Because of the Civil War and Indian troubles the second fair was not held until 1864. The fair records for that year report 37 entries of cattle, 29 of horses, nine of hogs, six of poultry, one of mules, one of sheep, eight of soil products, six of farm machinery, 39 of garden and orchard products, 16 of fancy-work, 38 of pantry and dairy, and several other miscellaneous entries. Although the fair promoters had to work with shoestring finances, they managed to buy a fairground near Denison in 1865 and during the following six years they fenced the ground, erected Floral Exhibition Hall, and built a half-mile race track. But the financial road of the Crawford County Agricultural Society was bumpy and increasing debts brought an end to its work in 1885.

A new fair association, the Agricultural and Improvement of Stock Society, was formed at once, and fairs continued at Denison until 1897. Financial misfortune stalked this group too. In 1895 cyclonic winds demolished the amphitheater, the judges' stand, the barn, the cattle sheds and the fences only a few months before fair time. Floral Hall was broken in two when the wind moved it some 20 feet. Many people, thinking there would be no fair, went to the Nebraska State Fair at Omaha, or the Ringling Brothers Circus held in town just a few days before the Crawford County Fair, and attendance at the fair was discouragingly low. The 1897 fair was the last held in the county, until 1907, when another agricultural association was formed and a fair was held at Arion.

The breeding of good livestock brought its problems, for in 1865 the greater part of the county was still unoccupied and unfenced. Those who had livestock took it for granted that the stock could range at large over the rich prairie, but the cattle, sheep, and hogs did not know the difference between prairie grass and wheat and corn. During

those early years few farmers could afford to fence their crops since fencing cost more than the lumped price of all other improvements. Consequently controversies between the crop farmers and the stock breeders were frequent.

Column after column of "superheated communications" appeared in the papers each time fencing was brought to a vote. In 1865 the County Board of Supervisors ordered a special election upon the petition of Dobson and 26 others to rescind the law that prohibited sheep and swine running at large. For the next 20 years the vote on the question swung back and forth, depending no doubt on the attitude of the newcomers in the county. In later years the crop farmers, who had managed to fence in their crops, asked that the stock be kept from running at large especially between sundown and sunrise.

Crawford had little timber land. Even if all of it had been used there would not have been enough to halfway meet the fencing needs. Since homestead tax exemption was offered to farmers only on 40 fenced acres that had a dwelling some kind of a fence was a necessity. Rails cost from 70 to 90 cents a rod, making the cost prohibitive for the majority of farmers, who had only enough funds to provide the most necessary equipment and a few head of livestock. Pine boarding was cheaper, but this had to be shipped from Minnesota, and the constant replacement cost made it almost as expensive. Neither stock nor crop farmer could fence his land without money. The farmer sorely needed a cheap fence that could be made hogtight, bull-strong, and horse-high.

When J. F. Glidden in Illinois secured a patent on barbed wire and opened a factory at Dekalb, it seemed that the solution to the fence problem had come. Independent companies sprang up all over the country, but several of the larger companies consolidated into a trust, secured control of the "bottom patents" on the new wire and put the price up. Independent companies were required to pay the trust a royalty of 75 cents per hundred pounds. The Iowa farmer, however, did not bow to the dictates of the eastern trusts. In 1881 a Farmer's Alliance, state-wide in its scope, was formed to promote the Farmers' Protective Association, and the trust was defeated. Then, with barbed wire about five-and-a-half cents a rod, it was not long before the farm lands were neatly fenced, and the cattle grazed in restricted areas on each farmer's own land.

By 1900 most of the farmers had fenced in their cattle as well as their crops with the new, cheap, stockproof wire fence. During this period of fence trouble, almost all of the unoccupied land was taken up by Swedish and German colonists who settled in the open prairie away from the few groves in the central part of the county.

The first invasion of grasshoppers came in 1866. A cloud of them filled the air one September afternoon and settled as fast as snowflakes on the fields. Although the farmers were almost helpless in the fight against the insects, the pigs and poultry fattened on them. Samuel Luney was reported to have saved a 40-acre field of wheat with his grasshopper exterminator. The most commonly used "hopper dozer", so called because the hopping insects took a deadly dose once they were caught, was a wooden or galvanized iron trough filled with inflammable oil or tar and attached behind a drag. When the drag was pulled across the fields, the grasshoppers jumped out of its way and hopped into the gasoline or tar and were killed. Wagon loads of them were destroyed this way. Although the cornfields were stripped of their blades, the corn itself was not greatly damaged that year.

A Mr. Wheeler said that late in the fall the grasshoppers "rose in great clouds, going to the southeast and obscuring the sun for hours." The farmers rejoiced at their going, but the damage the next spring was worse, for the young grasshoppers hatched from the eggs left in the soil and ate every green thing.

The second half of the sixties and early seventies brought a combination of hardships. Grasshoppers came again, not for a brief visit as before, but for a three or four-year stay, during which time they swept the county yearly from 1873 to 1876. One correspondent at Dowville reported in the August 4, 1873 issue of the Denison Bulletin: "The grasshoppers have arrived safely at Dowville and are foraging in regular style. They seem to be as fond of radishes, onions, and mustard as the milder varieties of vegetables. One farmer says he has 25 acres of corn manufactured into bean poles; another says his 40 acres of corn will not be worth harvesting. The air is thick with them as they come down like showers of snow. We just received an order from Bon and Hendricks for a barrel of cabbage, but we are sorry to say we have disposed of our entire crop to the grasshoppers. The width of the territory they are covering is about 20 miles and reaches from about three miles west of Denison to three miles west of Dunlap."

Otis Grout of Paradise Township made a grasshopper crusher in 1874 which many of his neighbors finally borrowed, though they ridiculed it at first. One newspaper described it as follows: "Imagine three hogsheads, or large barrels - two in front four feet apart, and one following four feet in the rear. Between the rear and the front sits the driver. This machine is drawn by two horses over the wheat fields and the grasshoppers seeing it coming try to escape by jumping between the two front rollers, but are caught by the rear roller before they have time to make another jump. On

Saturday this combination of rollers was kept continually greasy with the mutilated bodies of grasshoppers." This was only one of the many varieties of "hopper dozer."

In 1875 and 1876, Crawford County escaped the severe devastations of the two preceding years to some extent, but not entirely. In June, 1875, the grasshoppers passed over Denison in countless millions and immense numbers of them dropped down and cleaned the gardens of cabbages, onions, peas, and other vegetables. Fields of grain near the town were destroyed. After a two-day visit they again migrated. During the fall of 1875 farmers everywhere over the county dragged their fields in the attempt to destroy grasshopper eggs. State and national subsidies aided them in this work. The newspaper at Denison reported that grasshoppers flying to the southeast passed high over Denison in 1879, and remarked, "May they have a safe journey down the Gulf of Mexico."

During the "grasshopper years" crop prices were so low that many farmers did not try to sell their crops. When it was reported in the East in 1876 that western Iowa farmers were burning corn for fuel rather than selling it at prevailing prices, people were horrified at the reckless waste of food. The newspaper at Denison, however, explained, "We place it on record for future reference that the cash price of corn on the cob is 20 cents per hundred lbs....As soft coal is $5 a ton, we are not sure but that corn is the cheaper fuel."

During the middle years of the 1870's the Railroad Land Company owned half of the non-resident lands in Charter Oak Township, which was the least developed section of the county for many years. When O. M. Criswell built his farmhouse there in 1874 his home became known as the half-way house between Denison and the villages on the Maple River. Criswell and his wife were friendly to all who passed their cabin, and soon a blacksmith shop and a store were built on his farm and the nucleus of the town of Charter Oak was begun. The mail was carried by pony express from Denison to Sioux City through Charter Oak Township, and was distributed from Criswell's farmhouse.

The haylands of both Charter Oak and Willow townships had for years been considered common property by all land owners in the county. Denison people used to make hay on the unoccupied ground and haul it to town to feed their stock, but with the coming of German and Swedish immigrants, free hay was no longer available. As late as 1873 a resident in Nishnabotna Township offered pasture land on the prairie surrounding his farm. One of the advantages, he pointed out, was that the cattle would not be disturbed

by settlers. To back up his statement he said that he had shot an elk the day before, and that he could shoot an elk any day he wished.

The tall grass of the unoccupied lands was still a menace to the settlers. Prairie fires in 1874 were especially bad, sweeping almost every section of the county. The earliest settlers said the fires of this year were the worst the county had suffered. All the people in Otter Creek Township fought the fire that burned the Baker farmstead and roared on to devour hundreds of acres of prairie and crops. After another fire had burned 100 tons of Judge Dow's hay at Dow City, it raged through Buck Grove and Coon Grove. At Vail a number of families sustained fire losses.

Unexpected blizzards sometimes caught families on the way home from town. The Green family who lived in the Pretty Prairie neighborhood started home from Dunlap early in February 1874. A blizzard soon swirled about them, but they did not feel its full force until the open sleigh emerged from the shelter of the timber. Then the horses, blinded by the driving snow, became almost unmanageable. Hours later, they stopped by a straw pile and refused to move. The Greens knew they were not more than a mile from home, but they had no idea in which direction it was. Piling straw on top of themselves, they lay down in the sleigh. Before daylight the next morning the driver tried to find a house, but had to return to the sleigh. At daybreak the mother of the family almost managed to reach a house she had seen in the distance. Luckily the farmer, a Mr. Palmer, saw her coming and in a short time he had the family in his house. The two babies in the group were the only ones who did not suffer from exposure.

The chinch bug invasion in the wheat area of the county, adding to other burdens that summer of 1879, may have increased the insurance written, for $47,475 in risks were carried that year with the Farmer's Mutual Insurance Association. The evil-smelling bugs were at their worst during that year and the next. Shortly after their arrival, the once fresh green fields looked as if they had been scorched by fire. The chinch bugs, coming so closely after the grasshoppers, killed the ambition of northwestern Iowans to raise wheat and the farmers soon abandoned the practice of putting all their eggs in one basket and turned again to diversified farming. The Farmer's Mutual Insurance Association did much to promote and safeguard the interests of the farmer. In 1910 the association had $2,724,812 in risks. The Germans established the German Mutual Insurance Company about the same time.

It was in 1888, when farmers were struggling with meager equipment, that William McHenry started his stock farm

on which he started his famous herd of purebred cattle. In some parts of the county slow and ponderous oxen still threshed the wheat for their owners, by stamping out the kernels, as they trod round and round the threshing floor.

McHenry, who had come to Denison after the Civil War, bought his first Aberdeen Angus in 1877, and developed his herd to such a degree in the next 15 years that it won the grand sweepstakes prize at the Illinois State Fair in 1892 and another grand prize at the World's Fair in Chicago in the same year. His breeding of purebreds, and the many prizes his herd won, turned the attention of farmers of the county to the value of good stock. By 1911, McHenry had 120 head of registered Aberdeen Angus grazing on the 4,000 acres he owned in the county. At one time he was president of the American Aberdeen Angus Breeders Association. It is said that for many years there were hardly any cattle in the county that did not have a strain of McHenry's purebreds. The herd was sold to a Californian, about 1920.

CHAPTER 4

GRADUAL FARM DEVELOPMENT

Many of the comfortable farmhouses scattered over the county were built during the 1880's when the farmers were prospering. Each night families gathered around the lighted oil lamp, standing in the center of the kitchen table. The children droned their spelling lesson for the next day over and over while mother darned the socks and mended the rents in the clothing. Father read his favorite weekly newspaper or studied the almanac to learn the best time for planting the crops or to see what suggestions he might follow. On winter evenings, a dish of apples and nuts were within convenient reach, and sometimes father read from one of the books he had brought from Sweden, Germany, or back East. The wind whistled around the corner of the house, but the fire in the kitchen range sent out a warmth that heated each one through and through before it was time to make the cold dash to the thick featherbeds. There they could sink deep into the feathers and stretch out their feet to warm them on the wrapped-up hot brick or flatiron that nestled at the bottom of the bed. In the morning, boys and girls were usually awakened by the tantalizing odor of buckwheat cakes and home-made sausage that they had often helped to stuff. Or there might be pork chops cut from the frozen hog carcass that hung from the rafter of the summer kitchen.

Both the houses and the barns were sturdily built. Frank S. King recalled in the 1930's that his stepfather's barn had an upper floor made of black walnut planks two feet wide and two inches thick.

For years many families used their lumber wagons for farming and pleasure. The horses worked in the fields during the week, but on Sunday they were hitched to the lumber wagon and took the family to church. When a neighbor died the funeral procession consisted of a long line of lumber wagons, and when the circus came to Denison, the family piled into the wagon at daybreak and arrived in town in plenty of time to see the big parade. Many times there was no money to see the performance under the big tent unless the boys were lucky enough to carry water to the elephants and get in free. On the way home at night, the children curled up in the bottom of the wagon and slept.

In 1931 Lon F. Chapman of Pasadena, California, recalled at an Old Settlers' meeting some of his boyhood experiences in Crawford County. He remembered the corn huskings when neighbors came from miles around to help get in the corn. At noon the hungry men had a wide choice of food;

half a dozen kinds of vegetables, ham, beef, sausage, gravies, sauces, fruits, pickles, preserves, and cakes. He lived in the county during his boyhood, and remembered his walks across the prairie to school; going after the cows which were often almost hidden in the high prairie grass and lined up so that they looked like lurking Indians waiting to pounce upon him;and helping his uncle cut and haul cordwood from the timber several miles from their house. Along Coon Creek were fine springs which furnished water for many of the farmers before wells were dug. Wild roses and sweet williams grew in the prairie grass along the road to school and the boys teased the water snakes found in every pool and threw stones at the blue racers that slithered through the grass to escape.

While the boys and girls were enjoying life on the prairie, their parents were organizing the Granges and farmers' unions to protect the farmers' rights. They joined the other farmers of the State in the fight against the barbed wire trust, and they organized several farmers' stores in the small towns to buy collectively and save money. The boys and girls growing up in the eighties and nineties promoted the Farm Bureau in its early days, and participated in the farm protests of the 1930's.

In 1884 a violent hailstorm and cyclone devastated parts of Union and Washington townships, killing several citizens and destroying the homes of more than a dozen settlers. Because of the plight of the farmers in this section, the County Board of Supervisors remitted their taxes in proportion to their losses. At this time land was selling at $10 an acre and only a third of the county was under cultivation.

The emphasis on cattle and swine raising continued. Stock soon began to be shipped in by the carload for feeding on the grassy, well watered hill-lands, and farmers shipped out stock they had bred. During the 1880's it was a common autumn sight to see farmers driving along all the roads with wagonloads of squealing swine for shipment at the Denison stockyards. During one Tuesday in December, 1886, the streets surrounding the stockyards were clogged with the bobsleds of the farmers who had taken advantage of the snow to haul pigs and cattle to town. On that day 450 hogs were taken in.

By this time there were two railroads operating in the county, and other shipping points were developing. In less than a month in 1887, the county's stockyard dealers bought 3,448 hogs that averaged 325 pounds each and filled 57 stock cars. Some one estimated that this represented 861 wagonloads.

During the nineties, farmers prospered in spite of hailstorms and windstorms. One storm in 1891 isolated Charter Oak from mail service for a week. In 1892, when famine raged in Russia, three carloads of corn were sent to the American relief ship. Through the efforts of P. E. C. Lally and his committee, the donations from all over the county, including the corn, amounted to $618.17, a generous contribution from Crawford County.

Crops were good in 1893. The county grew 4,855,017 bushels of corn, 231,399 bushels of wheat, 1,169,923 bushels of oats, 471,622 bushels of barley, 78,530 bushels of potatoes, and 25,746 bushels of rye. The farms were stocked with 13,728 horses, 72,767 hogs, 9,824 sheep, and 44,445 cattle of which 330 were purebred. Then the drought of 1894 came and plunged the county into a year of hard times. Corn averaged not more than 12 bushels to an acre, no cattle were imported to feed, and thus one of the farmers' sources of cash income was abruptly cut off.

The letter of a farmer's wife, published in the Denison Review, December 26, 1894, pictures the situation vividly. "Editor Review: Strange as it may seem with all the charities and donations abroad in Crawford County, nothing (so far as we know) has been done to aid the poor farmers, who in our estimation are by far the greatest sufferers from the terrible drouth -- they who toiled and worked so hard all spring and summer and now have nothing to show for it. 'Already their great piles of fodder have dwindled away and their hay stacks which were very diminutive at first are daily growing smaller, and their corn cribs are empty. Here is their stock which must have feed from now until another harvest. These bald facts are staring them in the face, and what is to be done?

"There are a great many farmers in the county who have not a bushel of corn, nor any money to buy with. Now would it not be a good plan for some of the good citizens of Denison to have shipped one or more carloads of corn for distribution among them? I think it can be done, and ought to be. I make this plea in behalf of the farmers, although I am not a farmer myself, but a

Farmer's Wife."

The farmers of the county did not immediately recover from the losses caused by the drought, but the railroad expansion at the close of the century brought a boom that indirectly helped them. When the Illinois Central Railroad pushed its line through to Council Bluffs in 1899, and when the Northwestern Railroad expanded with branch lines that crossed the county, new towns and shipping points were created. Cash renters were still in distress, but those who had bought their farms weathered the storm. By this time

German influence had become very strong in the county. When the railroad was extended through the farm land held by the Germans, the towns of Schleswig and Ricketts were platted, and the value of adjacent farm lands doubled, for markets were more accessible. Some say that the prosperity of the German farmers began the day that people gathered from far and near to buy Schleswig town lots, then staked out in a cornfield, but actually the years of struggle against wind and storm, grasshoppers and prairie fires had laid the foundations for prosperity.

By 1900 there was little land available in the county at prices a young farmer just starting out could afford. Nebraska, Kansas, and Dakota lands had been boomed for a decade, and many of the sons of Crawford County pioneers migrated to the Dakotas. Thousands of other Iowans had preceded them in quest of new land that was plentiful at low prices. Land at home was no longer cheap or plentiful, for most of the older farmers in Crawford County were not yet ready to relinquish their carefully cultivated fields and retire to the nearest town. In Crawford as in other counties farmers talked constantly of the glowing reports from the Dakotas. From the time the Dakota migration began, in the early 1900's, population in Crawford County gradually decreased from decade to decade.

The opening decade of the twentieth century brought many changes to farm life. Farm machinery was introduced, roads were improved, and rural telephones were established. Automobiles were still eyed dubiously. That cars could ever serve the farmer seemed ridiculous in those days, when horses reared or bolted and ran whenever they saw one.

The farmers of the county, wanting to secure the very best seed corn, were much interested in the work of Professor P. G. Holden at Iowa State College. He had had long experience in selecting and propagating seed corn. The railroad officials of Iowa, knowing they would benefit from an increased corn yield, furnished him from time to time with special demonstration trains. On March 10, 1905, when the Holden Seed Corn Special pulled into Denison via the Northwestern, about five hundred farmers, business men, and students from Denison Normal were waiting. Three of the cars were equipped for lecturing and demonstrations. A month later the Seed Corn Special sponsored by the Illinois Central stopped at Denison, and another large audience listened attentively to Professor Holden. The results of his visits were seen in improved farming methods.

Interested in progressive movements that would yield better harvests and better herds, the farmers throughout the county began to diversify their crops and include more dairy

cattle in their herds. Dairying in conjunction with general farming augmented the farm products, though stock raising continued to be the basic business. One buyer alone shipped 150 carloads of hogs and 35 carloads of cattle in 1910.

When the boom came during the first World War, things went well for Crawford County farmers. Carloads of cattle, shipped in to fatten on the sloping hillsides, were shipped out again to markets at Omaha and Sioux City.

The hard times of the early days seemed far away. Perhaps half of the pioneer farmers were still plowing and planting crops in the prairie they had broken, but many had retired to the villages to rest and pass their remaining days advising their sons on the best crop for the west 40 or some other farm problem. Others, with no relatives interested in farming, were renting their farms to strangers, and a few who dreamed of vaster estates farmed the land they owned and rented still more land. The 1922 State Farm Reports listed 2,607 farms in the county, averaging 170 acres each. These were farmed by 1,197 owners, 824 renters, and 140 who both owned and rented. The total value of their farm products and livestock was $15,000,000.

A drive through the county revealed comfortable farm houses and well-built barns, granaries, silos, and corncribs. There was an air of well-being even among the herds of cattle and the droves of swine that grazed and rooted inside the neatly fenced pasture lands. The occasional stalks of corn that lifted their heads above their twelve or fourteen-foot neighbors were carefully noted, for down at the State Capital in Des Moines folks were interested in the tallest corn in the State.

More than half the people in the county lived on the farms, and the towns owed their prosperity to farm success. The entire population was dependent on the marketing of farm produce and businesses in town reflected the trend of the farms. There were grain elevators, cream and poultry buying stations, and farm machinery and implement houses. Nearly every farm family had a car in the 1920's, about one in eight had trucks, and about a fourth owned tractors. Running water and electric lights were not uncommon. Things seemed better than they had ever been. Only a few heard the rumblings beneath the surface, homesteads mortgaged to buy more land, farm tenancy increasing, erosion eating away the farm lands, and fields overworked without rotation, impoverishing the land.

The depression of the 1930's swooped down unexpectedly on the farmers. Banks all over the county failed during the later twenties, and loans which could not be paid were

called in. Outside companies soon held the mortgages and notes. When foreclosures came, pioneers lost the well-equipped farms they had wrested from the prairie in long, hard years of work. The personal possessions of renters, too, were sold to pay overdue rent. The companies were chiefly interested in the immediate ability to settle.

The stunned farmers at first accepted the situation. Then, as in times past, many farmers in the county and throughout the State organized to save themselves. One result was the Farm Holiday Association. Attempts had been made in other counties to stop the sales of renters' possessions and prevent foreclosure. Then, in the spring of 1933, Crawford County took similar action. Early in May, the district court in session at Denison ordered a foreclosure sale at the Joe Shields' farm. Anticipating trouble, the sheriff had dispatched special state deputies to the farm. These deputies, armed with axe handles and clubs instead of guns, suspiciously watched the crowd gather at the sale hour approached. The sale had started, and two cribs of corn had been sold when a truck filled with twenty or thirty farmers drove into the yard. At a word from the leader, they piled out of the truck, formed a flying wedge, and pushed toward the sheriff. Many in the crowd of 500 joined them, and a battle of clubs ensued. Several of the deputies and state agents were severely clubbed before the sale was stopped.

The sheriff, not knowing what might happen, asked Gov. Clyde Herring to send State militia. With the county and the adjacent territory under martial law until order could be restored, 64 men were arrested. But only 22 were held for trial. These, convicted on contempt of court charges, paid $50 fines and returned to their homes. On May 17, the martial law was lifted and the few troops still in the county were withdrawn.

The farm riots over a widespread area resulted in national emergency measures to help the farmers through these difficult times. The droughts of 1934 and 1936, with the subsequent crop failures, forced 824 farmers to apply for WPA jobs and 450 to seek feed and seed loans. The AAA payments of more than $600,000 yearly were all that enabled many farmers to support their families and stay on their land.

By 1930, from 50 to 75 per cent of the original soil in the county had been eroded with occasional moderate gullies, and the other fourth had from 25 to 40 per cent of its original soil eroded. The only forested areas left in the county were in Union, Washington, and Boyer townships, until farmers planted silver leaf maples, black walnuts, boxelders and cottonwoods on their homesteads.

In 1935 a CCC camp was established just outside of Denison to aid farmers on soil conservation projects. Slowly the work gained adherents. The 53 cooperating farms of 1936 had increased to 162 by 1940, with a waiting list of over 100. The men of the CCC camp -- one of the three veteran camps in Iowa -- worked on soil erosion projects in Paradise Township, and in the growing of experimental fields of legumes under the sponsorship of Iowa State College. Experimental cattle feeding projects, also under the supervision of State College, were tried on 40 or more farms.

Crops in 1940 were more diversified than ever before. Popcorn, marketed at Sac City where the Cracker Jack Company had an elevator, provided an additional income. Dairying products brought revenue from the Armour Creamery at Denison, and beef cattle and hogs were trucked to Sioux City and Chicago. Cooperative shipping associations rather than individual dealers handled the many hogs. More than eight per cent of the corn was "hogged down" and nearly a thousand acres of corn were cut for ensilage. Soybeans also were used for ensilage. The bulk of the oats, the second crop in acreage, was fed to the horses and hogs. Sheep raising was a side line in some of the rougher areas, and poultry was raised on almost every farm. Much poultry, both dressed and alive, was shipped out. Hay crops -- timothy, clover, alfalfa, sweetclover, millet, and sudan grass -- were grown for feeding stock. At first the Iowa settlers failed to realize that the clover grasses could grow on the prairie soil. When later comers discovered that clover not only flourished on this land but renewed its waning nitrogen, clover became one of the big diversifying crops.

Farm tenancy in the county was slightly above the average for Iowa in 1930, but according to the Des Moines Register of November 27, 1940, 73 farms, totaling 12,314 acres had been sold during the preceding 18 months, mostly to tenant farmers. This did not include other farms sold on a contract basis. Prices paid varied from $15 to $115 per acre. The Farm Security Administration, too, was assisting tenant farmers in buying the land they were farming. Mr. and Mrs. Charlie F. Thompson, renters for more than 15 years, were the first tenants to purchase a Crawford County farm under the Farm Security Administration's tenant-purchase plan. Five other tenant-purchase sales were being completed in the county at that time (January 1941).

During this critical period of droughts, the grasshopper and chinch bug invasions, the financial stringency arising from crop failures, and the resulting social unrest, Crawford County was fortunate in having a large and active Farm Bureau Association that made every effort to secure for the farmers of the county all available Federal aid. In 1936

the South Crawford Rural Electric Cooperative was organized to bring electricity to the farms in the county. The year 1940 saw the formation of the Crawford County Soil Conservation District. Good times were on their way back. Nearly all farm homes had telephones and more than half had radios, while piped water and electricity, though still scarce were on the increase.

CHAPTER 5

EDUCATION, RELIGION, AND RECREATION

Settlers had been living at Mason's Grove for nearly six years before the first school was erected. The cabins of about twenty families were scattered through the grove when Morris McHenry came to the settlement in 1856. When the parents learned that he would teach if he had a schoolhouse, they gladly chopped the trees and hauled the logs, and built the school that very year. To this little log school on the Boyer River bank children trudged through the woods in December to the first school session held in the county. Their seats were slabs of wood and their desks hewn slabs fastened to the wall. A fire blazed in the mud and stick fireplace all day long to keep them warm. As nearly as is known, the 16 pupils who attended the first three and one-half month term were John, Cyrus, and Joseph Dobson, George and Noah Johnson, Margaret and Angeline Mason, Alice Laube, Henry, Elizabeth and George Winans, Martha, Mary, and Caleb Mowery, and Joseph Skinner. The fees paid by their parents provided McHenry's salary.

During 1857 the first school tax in the county was assessed against taxable property. But at this time the county had only three townships -- Union, Denison, and Milford -- and the school tax in 1858 little more than paid the salary of Thomas Dobson, the first county superintendent of schools. He received $25 for six months' work. He had authority to grant any member of a family permission to teach, and thus aid some settler struggling "to winter" his family and build his house. When school was held at a settler's home, children living nearby could attend if they wished. This practice did not always provide the best qualified teachers, but it did give the pioneer children a chance to get some schooling.

Thomas Aldrich taught the first school at Denison in a one-room log school erected in 1857. Settlers in the southern part of the county also established schools. In Union Township in 1858 a June freshet washed away the only bridge in the vicinity and separated the teacher, the log schoolhouse, and one pupil from eight pupils stranded on the other side of the river. The father of one of the pupils built a boat and rowed the children across the river each day thereafter so that school could be held despite the flood.

Five years after the Civil War, children all over the county walked to school on the rough, bumpy roads, or atop the ridges of frozen ruts. Classes were held in the spare

room of a house or in an empty storeroom when the township school board had not yet erected a schoolhouse. As the boys and girls walked along the rough road, listening to the bare branches creak in the cutting wind, they hoped the teacher would be there ahead of them to have a fire started in the drum of the big stove. When the teacher was well-liked the big boys often whittled up some pine shavings and split a pile of kindling so she'd have no trouble in starting the fire. As the children trudged along, dinner pails banging against their legs and slates clutched in their mittened fingers, they watched quails scuttle under the bushes, and prairie chickens fly low in search of seeds and berries. In school they figured and read and recited to the rattle and bang of slates and made as frequent trips to the water bucket as they dared.

The schoolhouse was also the church and the polling place for the early settlers. On Sunday mornings if there was a preacher in the neighborhood, the settlers crowded into the schoolhouse, sitting on the slab seats, or on stools brought from home. In October 1873, during an election held in the schoolhouse that once stood on the site of James McCracken's farm in Nishnabotna Township, the voting was interrupted by a prairie fire. Everyone -- judge, clerk, and voters -- dashed out to fight the fire and saved the schoolhouse, but in spite of their efforts the fire spread and destroyed thousands of dollars worth of hay and other crops.

When the railroad cut across Crawford County immediately after the Civil War, new towns were platted and the first great rush of settlers expanded the school population. It was not long then before schoolhouses began to go up. At Vail the first school term was held in 1871, and in the same year new schoolhouses were erected at Denison and at Dow City. School was taught in a carpenter shop at Westside in 1873, but the next year saw a schoolhouse built for the town's 34 pupils.

The new two-story brick school at Denison stood on high ground overlooking the valley of the Boyer River. When the pupils daydreamed, they could look out of the windows and see the Northwestern trains making their way through the valley and watch the smokestacks of the engines billowing spirals of smoke into the clear air.

In the rural schools the teachers planned box socials, spelling bees, entertainments, and singing schools. Literary society programs and debates provided entertainment for many winter evenings. Almost everyone in the community participated in these neighborhood affairs, and the debates begun in the schoolhouse were frequently continued throughout the week whenever a few pupils or parents got together.

Prominent citizens welcomed an opportunity to "say a few words" at a school entertainment. The school was the center of social and intellectual activity in each community.

But the schools were not as well run as many felt they could be, and there were a few in the county who studied the educational problem seriously. In 1876, J. Fred Meyers, of Denison prepared a paper for the State Bureau of Education in which he made a number of recommendations for the improvement of schools. He suggested, among other things, the establishment of County Normal and Industrial Colleges free to all within the county. The courses he advocated included many of the features later embodied in industrial training courses. At this time there were few public high schools in the State although there were numerous private academies for those who could pay the tuition fees. At Denison, the Reverend G. W. Gunnison established Western Iowa Academy, one of fifteen such institutions recorded in the biennial report of the state superintendent of public instruction for 1871, but it was short-lived.

Not until 1880 was there much attempt to provide a uniform teachers' examination. The children in rural districts used whatever books could be found at home, and the teacher had to get along with meager equipment. There were more schools than schoolhouses in the rural districts, the school board using an empty room in a centrally located farmer's home until a frame school could be erected. Log schoolhouses were no longer built after 1870, but often the first frame school was little better than a shack, and was used only until the district could raise the money to erect a better building.

During the 1870's, Swedish and German immigrants settled in the northern part of the county in districts that had been used as public grazing grounds for herds. Gradually, as other railroad lines crossed the county and as the Northwestern Railroad expanded its trackage within the county, other towns sprang up along the tracks. Schools, always one of the first thoughts, were opened in rooms over a furniture store at Charter Oak in 1888, and in the hardware store building at Schleswig in 1900.

There had been schools in the old Kiron settlement since 1869 and about 1900 the school there had its own quarters.

German influence became predominant during the 1880's and the question of a language school arose at Denison. In 1861 the State Board of Education had given electors in the school district power to decide by vote whether or not German, or other languages, could be taught in one or more

of the schools in the district. At Denison the German Verein established a German and English school in 1867. By December of that year 52 pupils were enrolled and the school had no room for more.

In various parts of the county there were parochial schools. Charter Oak had both a Catholic and a Lutheran school in addition to the public school, and at Vail a Catholic school flourished. Most of the communities, however, had only public schools. The county superintendent still had power to issue teaching certificates during the 1890's but there was a state as well as a county regulation concerning the course of study in the schools, and the rural school curriculum was more uniform. Desire for higher education kept increasing the scope of the public town schools. In 1886 the Denison high school graduated its first class. Five students received their diplomas.

Seven years later the Denison Normal School, Academy and Business College was established through the efforts of Leslie M. Shaw, later Governor of Iowa, and other leading citizens. Overnight Denison raised $16,000 for its construction and two months later a total of $30,050 had been raised. The stockholders incorporated and purchased 20 acres just east of Denison for the college campus. An additional 68 acres was platted by the council into town lots and sold to augment the school funds. The Normal School, erected at a cost of $35,000, opened its sessions on January 3, 1893 with an enrollment of 35. One of its early bulletins states, "From dormitory kitchen to principal's office everything is of the very latest design and best quality." Academic, scientific, normal, commercial, shorthand, classical, "typewriter", telegraphy, German, elocution, music, and art courses were offered to the students. In 1899 there were 216 students enrolled, and later from 250 to 300 students received instruction each year. By 1910 a total of 319 had been graduated from the school.

In 1917, W. C. Van Ness, who had directed the activities of the Normal almost from the beginning, retired. The stockholders, with the consent of the voters, first leased and then sold the building to the Denison school board. The plan to establish a public junior college in the old Normal Building did not materialize, but the normal and business classes held at the school relieved congestion in the high school. In 1937 Denison students moved into a new $135,000 building and the classes in the old college building were transferred to the new one. The year 1940 came to its close with the old Normal School still vacant.

During the years that the academy flourished, the public schools of the county increased in efficiency. The

county superintendents continued to issue teachers' certificates and supervised the courses of study until 1916, when the 31st General Assembly of Iowa gave the State Board of Education the sole right to issue teachers' certificates. As a result, examinations were uniform over the State and requirements for teachers were standardized.

The curriculum in Crawford County schools broadened in each decade after 1900. A review of the changes in the Denison High School is a fair record of the changes made in other schools in the county. In 1897 Denison High School was accredited by the State. Six years later the high school enrollment reached 100. Manual training was provided for the boys in 1906 and domestic science for the girls in 1908. The school system was reorganized on the junior high school basis in 1919, and by 1923 there were 212 enrolled in the upper four grades of the high school.

By 1940 there were 131 rural schools in the county and 12 graded town schools, only three of which were limited to eight grades. Denison, the county seat, had grown to maintain four schools: two grade schools, a junior high and a senior high. In 1940, Mr. F. N. Olry, the County Superintendent of Schools, reported 1,502 pupils in the county's rural schools and 2,728 in the schools at Charter Oak, Deloit, Denison, Dow City, Kiron, Manilla, Schleswig, Vail, and Westside. Of these, 1,059 were in high schools. The consolidated school, popular in many districts of Iowa, was never widely accepted in Crawford County, only Dow City and Westside having consolidated high schools.

Mormons, who had separated from the group at Kanesville and scattered to the various counties surrounding Pottawattamie County, were the first church group to settle in Crawford in any numbers. No longer members of the Mormon Church, they made no attempt at church organization until a later date when missionaries of the Latter Day Saints (the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints) came to Dowville and Mason's Grove where most of them had settled.

The first church in the county was organized in the same vicinity as the first school and the first service was held at the cabin of Rufus Richardson at the Mason's Grove settlement on October 16, 1856. A Methodist minister, the Reverend William Black, preached to a cabin full of men, women, and children and later organized a Methodist class; Methodist work in the county was supported by missionary money during the early years.

Circuit riders, reaching their congregations on horseback, preached to isolated groups in little schoolhouses, empty storerooms, or in settlers' cabins. One of the best

remembered preachers was Uncle Billy McGinnis. When his fervor had reached the high point in his sermon, he would pull off his coat, throw it into a corner, and speak in a voice that could be heard for miles around. Part of his circuit lay in Nishnabotna Township at a time when the nearest church was at Harlan in Shelby County.

On the heels of the Methodists in organization were the Baptists. The Reverend J. W. Denison, founder of the town, organized a Baptist Church with 16 members at Denison in October, 1857, and served as pastor of the church for seven years. He had already been preaching for some time at the Denison House, the only public building then in town. As was true of most churches in their early years, the congregation met in various places, such as the schoolhouse and the courthouse, until 1869 when the first house of worship in Denison and the county was erected. It was no easy matter, in days when wheat and corn and hog crops brought scarcely enough to buy clothes and necessities, to save out enough to build a parsonage or a church. When the Baptist Church was destroyed by fire 17 years later, the congregation held services at the Germania Hall and at the Episcopal Church until money could be raised and a new building put up.

Many of the first settlers at Mason's Grove had been members of the Mormon Church and had followed the varying fortunes of that church until the introduction of polygamy. Some had shared in the persecution at Nauvoo, but they could not accept polygamy. When Brigham Young sent the call from Utah for all the faithful to join him in 1854, Kanesville's population of more than seven thousand shrank to scarcely a thousand, but the settlers of that faith in Crawford County did not heed the call. There were also many Mormons in nearby counties who did not go.

At Mason's Grove the common problems of the settlers drew them closer together, and many newcomers joined the Mormon group that began to hold services at the Mason Schoolhouse about 1858. When two Mormon missionaries of the Latter Day Saints Church visited the settlement, a church was organized in 1865 with 11 members. Meetings were then held alternately in the three schoolhouses in the vicinity. The Latter Day Saints Church at Dowville had 48 members by 1872.

In the 1870's four other denominations organized their first churches in the county. The Catholic Church had been ministering to its people through missionary priests, who had celebrated the Mass in homes of the settlers and at the courthouse in Denison, for some 15 years before a Catholic Church was organized. The first Catholic Church was founded at Denison, the second at Vail, which had been settled

largely by the Irish. St. Ann's Church at Vail was, still in 1941 the largest church building in the county. The Presbyterians became active when Dr. James DeWolf and his family settled at Vail, a newly platted town, in 1870. Two years later the first pastor was called. When the German settlers arrived in the 1870's they formed parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The first of these was at Denison. One of the congregations bought the old Denison school building and converted it into a church in 1872. The first Episcopalian meeting was a Christmas morning prayer service held at a schoolhouse near Vail in 1875. Later, Episcopalian churches were established at Denison and Vail.

The Christian Scientists were the last denomination to found a church in the county. A few families were reading Christian Science about 1892, but there was no organized group until 1896. A building was erected eight years later.

Churches sprang up in the new towns as settlers poured into the county. Germans usually established the Evangelical Lutheran congregations and the Swedish started the Baptist groups. Services were in German and Swedish through the first years of the twentieth century.

The church was also a social center in the small towns and in the few rural districts that had one. Ladies Aid Societies and Willing Worker groups drew the women of the town together to work in some common enterprise and have a good time too. Frequently the church was the largest building in the village, and meetings of all kinds were held in its auditorium. Church suppers, church socials, and church entertainments were looked-forward-to events on the social calendar. They vied for popularity with the activities of secular organizations such as lodges, the German Vereine, and Brotherhoods.

Sunday morning was started bright and early with getting everyone ready for Sunday school and church. In many families Saturday evening, too, was a preparation time. Shoes were shined, dresses pressed, buttons sewed on boys' coats, rents in trousers mended, and hair put up on rag or paper to insure its curliness the next day. Sometimes the meals for the Sabbath were prepared on Saturday since Sunday was a day of rest. After breakfast on Sunday everyone dashed to do the last minute "sprucing up" or "primping." If the church had no bell, father's or mother's eyes watched the old Seth Thomas clock carefully. No family wanted to be late. In one church in a nearby county, some members in the congregation wanted a bell, but the minister admonished them, "Real Christians don't need a bell to call 'em to church like you have to call pigs to the trough." That settled the

matter for a time. In most churches singing was a part of the services that was thoroughly enjoyed. The singing may have been lacking in harmony, but it had a fervor and a volume that gave the singers themselves great joy.

CHAPTER 6

TRANSPORTATION

The development of any county can be traced through a study of its transportation growth, from prairie schooner to airplane. The story of Crawford County's modes of travel includes even a wheelbarrow! One intrepid frontiersman of 1866, Joseph Ahart, loaded a few pieces of his household necessities into his wheelbarrow, placed his bouncing baby on top of the load, and then set out with his wife from Boonesboro, Iowa, to walk to Union Township, a good 80 miles as the crow flies.

He had to have a good nose for trails to find his way across the prairies at all. Trails were unmarked for mile after mile, except for an occasional stake or some natural landmark such as a huge boulder. Most of the roads even in eastern Iowa were not much more than alternating humps and quagmires but lack of roads and marked trails did not daunt the earliest settlers. Terrible roads were the every-day fare, new trails could not be much worse.

Crawford County, however, had a much briefer pioneer travel period than its neighbors to the north and south. A state road, such as it was, passed through Denison from Davenport to Council Bluffs. This was the trail of the Forty-Niners. It is said that many of the gold seekers, attracted by the rich soil of the prairies, stopped in Iowa to homestead and left the gold digging to others. During the years before the county was organized, the majority of settlers came to the county in prairie schooners, drawn by the oxen that later dragged the breaking plows through the tough prairie sod. A few of them arrived in horse-drawn wagons, but oxen seemed better able to flounder through slough and quagmire on the trail. The necessity for this kind of travel did not last long, however. Only a little more than a decade after the county was organized the first railroad reached Denison, and during the next quarter of a century three other railroads built lines that criss-crossed the county, giving even the smallest village service.

Stage travel in Iowa was in its heyday during the 1850's, when the county still lay on the edge of civilization. The most used route to Council Bluffs passed through Denison and Deloit, but one of the earliest references to stagecoach service, in 1866, stated that there was tri-weekly service between Fort Dodge and Council Bluffs. Looking back in 1941 from the comfort of automobiles speeding over cement roads, it is easy to romanticize about stagecoach travel, but a journey by stage was no pleasant experience. The jolting

and the jarring, under the best of conditions, wore the sturdiest traveler to a frazzle. The first travelers in Iowa were probably more familiar with the "mud wagon" stages than with the more luxurious Troy and Concord coaches and their six-span of horses. These mud wagons, drawn by two horses and carrying but four passengers, had broad, high wheels designed to buck the mudholes and quagmires found in the road after every rain.

As late as 1870 in northwestern Iowa, stage fare on the Haskell and Cheney coaches was still referred to as "ten cents a mile and a fence rail." The fence rail was carried along to pry the wheels out of the sloughs on roads where the horses could not budge the coach and the passengers had to climb out and wade. Sometimes the baggage had to be dumped into the mud and water, and if that did not limber up the coach, everyone had to push and tug to help the horses drag it out of the mudhole. Sometimes passengers had to walk and lug their baggage for miles through the gumbo before the stage reached a portion of the road where it seemed safe to reload and start again.

Of course, many trips were made with no trouble at all but during the 1850's criticism of stagecoaching was impatient and vehement. The most comfortable trip meant a jolting that almost shook the bones apart, and there was always the chance that a bolt would jar loose, a coupling break, or an axletree crack, and upset the coach. Occasionally a driver not too familiar with the route would strike a tree stump, hit a wobbly bridge in the wrong place, or miss a treacherous ford and treat his passengers to a "turn over", or a ducking. Then the coach had to be righted, the passengers consoled, and the trip resumed.

In winter, valiant stage drivers battled drifts and snow, but usually it was a short and hopeless struggle. On some of the Iowa routes stage sleds were used. A stagecoach trip in winter required quantities of clothing, and even then the cold was intense. Foot warmers could seldom be used because of the danger of setting the stage on fire.

Passengers could never be sure of schedules. The stage might be an hour or a day late. Regular service was awarded only to communities where the business warranted it. Des Moines was still hoping for regular twice-a-week two-horse hack service from Iowa City in January of 1852, and Council Bluffs at that time had only a once-a-week stage connection with central and northern Iowa. The trip from Crawford County to Council Bluffs took three days. The speed of the coaches, sometimes slackened by the bad roads, ran from five to eight miles an hour if the coach could be kept moving. It is little wonder that the early settlers preferred to

provide their own means of transportation, even after stage lines had been established.

The Civil War gave stagecoaches a longer lease on life, for all types of transportation were needed to ship and haul the war supplies and to carry soldiers. The war caused a halt in railroad building and freed stagecoaching from competition with railroads for almost another decade. In Crawford County, the railroad helped stagecoaching for a time, for the end of the rail line in 1866 was at Denison and people came from all nearby points to reach the railroad. There was heavy travel between Denison and Council Bluffs, and between Denison and Sioux City.

At the height of the stagecoach days in Crawford County, the stage office was the congregating place for news-hungry settlers. Not only did the coach bring the weekly bundle of newspapers, but the driver himself was an encyclopedia of unpublished news. The county was still composed mostly of clusters of farmhouses with only a few villages and, until 1866, the three towns of Dow City, Deloit, and Denison. The farmers, who had already started to feed hogs for market, killed, dressed, and hauled their own wagon loads of pork to Council Bluffs. B. F. Wicks, an early settler returned to Crawford County from a trip to Illinois in one of the first buggies used at Mason's Grove.

The coming of the Northwestern Railroad to Crawford County in 1866 stimulated its growth. Through the influence of numerous land agents, the county became a mecca for groups of Swedish and German immigrants who wanted farm lands. The Iowa Railroad Land Company, organized to handle the sale of railroad lands, promoted the sale of farms through its agent, Colonel William F. Familton. Swedish families came in successive waves from Minnesota to congregate in Otter Creek and Stockholm townships until the region was almost entirely Swedish. While the Swedish farmers were getting a foothold, a few Irish settlers were buying land near Vail, a new town, and still other newcomers were moving into Union Township.

Following on the heels of the Swedish and Irish immigrants were the Germans, many of whom came from Scott and Clinton counties although they had only recently arrived there from Germany. The German farmers began to come in 1872 and 1873, traveling to Denison on the railroad.

The years immediately following the coming of the first Germans were lean ones for the farmers. Crops were poor and prices for farm products low. Severe blizzards threatened the settlers' safety in winter, and in the summer of 1874 hail storms destroyed crops. In one vicinity during one of these storms the hail penetrated the siding of a house and

in another neighborhood it broke a boy's arm. A second hail storm destroyed the crops of a dozen or more farmers. In the fall of that year prairie fires cost the farmers thousands of dollars.

Immigrants continued to pour into the county, however, and settlement spread into Charter Oak and Stockholm townships. In 1875 the total land sale was 10,508 acres, and by the end of the year 58,085 acres were under cultivation. Farmers were spreading out in the vicinity of Westside, too, eagerly buying prairie land that was selling at four to six dollars an acre.

The German farmers, thrifty and good managers, had lived as a compact group in the county. They organized their own societies, continued to speak their own language, and established their own lodges. In later years, when William Familton spoke of their well-built homes and abundant crops he said, "I sold prairie lands to those Germans at from $5 to $7.50 an acre. I used to drive back home almost ashamed of myself for having played them for suckers. Now they are rich, and I -- well I wish I could buy that land back at $7.50 an acre."

Shortly after railroad trains began running to Denison the first grasshopper plague came. It is said that the grasshoppers were so thick on the railroad grade near the McWilliams farm that freight trains were stalled, unable to run on the slippery tracks. Farmers nearby assisted the train crews in cleaning the rails so that the driving wheels could have traction. In some places the grasshoppers were hauled away in wagon loads. It is said that they gathered on the railroad grade because they liked to sit on the tracks and sun themselves.

The period from 1866 to 1900 was one of steady growth. In 1881 a second railroad, the Milwaukee, reached the county. Colonel Familton said when it came through that only one-third of the county was cultivated and land was selling for $10 an acre. Had it not been for Morris McHenry, however, the route would doubtless have passed through Shelby County, six miles or so to the south. The officials of the Milwaukee road had already surveyed several lines for the proposed Sioux City road when John F. Stevens, for a time chief engineer for the Panama Canal, was sent with a crop of engineers to run the permanent line to Defiance, Shelby County, the planned junction point. Accidentally he and Morris McHenry met during the winter of 1880 as Stevens was surveying in the vicinity of Paradise Creek. They fell to talking about the line through Defiance, and McHenry suggested a routing that would hit the main line some ten miles east of Defiance and make a shorter route to Chicago. Stevens was pleased

with the suggestion and, after having the new routing sanctioned by company officials, ran the locating line through the section where Manilla was later established.

Before the close of the century two other railroads, the Illinois Central and the Great Western, built lines through Crawford County in their Chicago to Omaha and Chicago to Sioux City routes. In 1899 from 20 to 30 trains a day passed through Denison.

In November, 1899, a collision occurred on the Illinois Central two miles north of Deloit when a gravel train ran into a freight loaded with 180 men returning from work. Twenty-four were injured. The Illinois Central was then extending its line from Fort Dodge to Council Bluffs diagonally through Crawford County. The coming of this road increased settlement all along its line.

In 1900, the main line of the Chicago Great Western cut across the southeastern corner of the county, giving the county the service of four railroads and their branch lines and making no community in the county more than six miles from a railroad. Three railroads passed through Arion, turning the village into a network of tracks.

The vast prairie without rivers needed the railroads to provide access to markets, and this period of railroad growth coincided with the era of rapid settlement. In April, 1888, the county had nearly 47 miles of railroad and by 1900 it had 156 miles. This ease of transporting crops greatly increased the value of the county's fertile land, for one of the greatest problems, hauling to market, was solved.

Roads in the county, however, had not been improved much up to 1900. With the stagecoach no longer the necessary mode of travel, people had not given much thought to roads. The farmer accepted bad roads as part of his lot, and planned his trips and his hauls to town when there was a "spell of dry weather." In June, 1904, when the first automobile tourist came through Denison, then on the Transcontinental Route, a crowd gathered on Main Street and surrounded the chauffeur who obligingly demonstrated the Moore's Four Cylinder he was driving from Omaha to Chicago. The Denison Bulletin remarked, "These autos are very common in Chicago and all the large cities, and are coming to be vehicles of much use as well as pleasure. Some Denison people are figuring on buying such machines, and it is likely that in a very short time they will be common here."

In the fall of 1904, E. C. Chamberlin of Denison purchased and drove the first automobile in the county. Automobiles became quite common among the townspeople of the county before 1920, but they were most unpopular with the

farmers, whose horses disputed the right of way with every passing automobile. Farmers' wives and children were afraid to drive to town, and even town folks who had horses abandoned evening pleasure rides. The prevalence of run-away horses and upset rigs led to a protest meeting held at the city hall in July 1906. The chairman stated the object of the meeting, saying: "It is thought best to organize and agree not to trade with anybody who owns an automobile, nor with anybody who drives one, or hires a man who uses one, and further not to vote for any man for judge or legislator who would not agree to use his influence to abolish the machines from the highway."

Experiences with frightened horses and overturned buggies were told and retold. It was pointed out that wives and children could no longer go to town for repairs if a piece of farm machinery broke down in the busy season. One of the men had to stop work and go himself ,since it was not safe for women or children to try to handle horses along the highways with automobiles abroad. The few automobile owners present defended themselves by reviewing Iowa's automobile laws, which they said would insure safety, if they were enforced. E. C. Chamberlin pointed out that local restriction would not solve the problem since he had counted 11 tourists driving through Denison on one day, and five on another. The chairman appointed a committee to draft a drastic resolution, but this was toned down until it finally read "We, the undersigned, request that owners of autos keep them off the public highways as they are a detriment to both town and country and constantly endangering the lives of the public. It seems that the wishes of the many should be respected by the few."

There had been a number of automobile road races in the United States since the first one, in 1895, promoted by the Chicago Times Herald and won by Charles E. Duryea. But the first to go through Denison was the New York to Paris race, which left New York and drove to Paris via Alaska and Siberia, reaching Denison in early March, 1908. The roads were in the worst possible condition, but the townspeople turned out to greet the American car, the first to arrive. They cordially welcomed the French and Italian drivers, who were forced to remain in town for several days. The Italian driver tried to drive his car over the railroad ties of the Illinois Central to Council Bluffs in an attempt to find a passable route, but he failed. The German population of the county celebrated with a banquet at the Nielson Hotel on the day that the driver of Protos, the German car, arrived at Denison.

In 1909 the famous Glidden trophy tour passed through Denison. This race was run for the fastest record on a

2,500-mile trip from Detroit, Michigan, to Denver, Colorado, and back to Kansas City, Missouri. Not many cars finished the race, but there were still a good number roaring away at it when the machines straggled through Denison, the first arriving on July 21. In those days of unmarked roads, the cars followed the confetti trail of the pathfinder car. Accompanying the contestants were a good many other automobiles: machines of the companies represented, press cars, and baggage trucks. The string of cars passed through Denison every few minutes that day without stopping, unless an engine needed water or a set of tires had to be cooled.

There had been several weeks of rain in the neighborhood, fortunately followed by some days of dry weather just before the tour reached western Iowa. The people of the county, assisted by the Illinois Central, raised a considerable fund for temporary improvement of the roads. Trenches were dug and the roads were drained and dragged just before the automobiles arrived and some portions of the road were planked. This helped the drivers maintain and sometimes exceed the scheduled speed of 20 miles an hour. The cars frequently had to be driven at the breakneck speed of 40 miles to keep up the average. Fractious teams sometimes got in the way, and frequently birds and small animals were struck and killed by the cars.

Pilots were changed from one section of the country to another. A. F. Boylan of Denison was pilot for the official pilot car from Jefferson to Council Bluffs, but he drove his own machine, an E. M. F. roadster, and arrived in Council Bluffs 15 minutes ahead of the pilot. This was the Everett, Metzger and Flanders motor car, popularly described as "Easy Mended and Fixed."

It is said that his car and that of Dai Lewis were "two spirals of dust", from Missouri Valley to Council Bluffs, as they streaked down the Missouri bottom land. The time from Denison to Council Bluffs was three hours and eight minutes, quite a cut from the days of the prairie schooner in the 1880's.

During the summer of the Glidden tour the commercial club at Denison sponsored an Auto Day that did much to break down the farmer's prejudice against automobiles. Farmers and their families were invited to Denison to enjoy an automobile ride -- a brief trip around the city and out into the country. Many families accepted the invitation, and not long afterward farmers in the vicinity began to buy cars.

The several tours called the condition of the roads to the attention of others than automobile owners. The Denison Commercial Club started its activities soon after the Glidden tourists had passed through the town, by recommending

that the roads of the Transcontinental Route from Council Bluffs to Clinton be maintained as an auto highway. It was then that the King drags came into widespread use to keep the dirt roads leveled and smooth. Gravel was widely employed, the gravel pits in Crawford County helping the county to keep its share of the roads in good condition. There was a road tax of one dollar and able-bodied men were expected to contribute one day's work a year, or one dollar, toward work on the road. More than a decade passed before Iowa began to replace its earth roads with cement, but in 1940 the once incredible top rate of 40 miles had become the average speed along the county highways.

Soon after cement roads became common in Iowa, trucks began to compete with the railroads in hauling crops to market. By 1933 railroad shipping had felt this drain to such an extent that even the one depot maintained at Arion by the three railroads passing through the town was abandoned. At one time the Milwaukee, Northwestern, and Illinois Central railroads each had its own stockyards, freight and passenger depot. But trucking, by 1940, handled almost all the short-haul business while the chief function of the railroads, both freight and passenger, was long distance. In 1941, Northwestern streamliners streaked through Crawford County without a stop, and the fast trains of the Milwaukee road stopped only at Manilla. Crawford County farmers who had eagerly welcomed the railroad forgot it as soon as cement roads made farm-to-market trucking more convenient.

Now and then, bored with the smooth roads, an occasional automobile driver would adventure away from the State highways to the few old roads left in the county. Always a favorite among these byways was the Old Ridge Road running north from Denison to Schleswig. In the 1880's the German immigrants, choked with the soot and dust of the trains that had brought them to Denison, drew their first full breath of prairie air at the top of the first hill of the Old Ridge Trail.

CHAPTER 7

THE RAILROAD TOWNS

Most of the towns in Crawford County are "railroad babies", towns that were either laid out or promoted by the Chicago and Northwestern or by the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, as those two railroads extended their tracks through Crawford County. Some of the settlements never became more than tiny villages with less than a hundred people, but several of them grew until they were strong rivals of the county seat.

The Northwestern Railroad fathered the first towns that came into existence after Denison and Deloit; it also established Dow City, although the community by that name had existed from the earliest days of the county's history. Westside and Vail, the first towns started in this way, were laid out in 1869, only a few years after the railroad reached Denison. Both towns, for a time little more than sign posts, had only the railroad section foremen for residents. When Thomas Ryan took charge of the Vail section, there was no house in sight except the one in which he lived, and when James Gillespie arrived at Westside to supervise that section, he and H. C. Newton, the station agent, were the only inhabitants.

Although the two towns had a parallel start, Vail forged ahead, and in 1941 was still the larger of the two. Its population in 1940 was 576 to Westside's 373. It is said that the Iowa Railroad Land Company withheld some of the most valuable business sites at Westside from sale, because they were interested in promoting Vail, named for one of the railroad officials. Westside was so-named because it lay to the west of a long, steep incline in the roadbed of the railroad. In October 1869, the Denison Review remarked that Westside was then a town, or had "town lots, at least." Isaac and Robert Patterson, who bought farms close by, were the first permanent settlers at Westside; Vail had for its first permanent resident the energetic Dr. James de Wolf who, with Thomas Ryan, laid out and surveyed the town. Wolf immediately erected a story-and-a-half building which he equipped as a combination grocery store, doctor's office, and residence. For many years he remained Vail's leading citizen.

Westside, with no one in particular to promote its welfare, received its first influx of inhabitants when veterans of the Civil War began to settle there in the 1870's. Railroad workers also brought their families here during the

time it was freight division headquarters. Here the Northwestern established a turntable and two water tanks and kept the extra engines needed to haul the heavily loaded freight trains over the summit of the steep incline just outside of the town. Schooling was provided for the 70 children of school age in the neighborhood. But the town had a slow growth, and for several years there were only a blacksmith shop, a small store, and a few residences. The post office, located at the depot, was supervised by the station agent until 1873. The German farmers in the surrounding country prospered, however, and their prosperity was soon reflected in progress for the town.

Vail had a typical western boom town growth. In 1869, it was not much more than a signboard and a house occupied by a railroad employee. But an influx of newcomers brought a hotel, a furniture store, several hardware stores, a harness shop, and a school, by 1873. In November of that year the Denison Bulletin reminded other communities in the county that Vail, "Though young, is taking rapid strides toward claiming the title of a city." New buildings were going up almost every week. The next year a shoeshop, a drug store, a saloon, and a carpenter shop were added to the list of businesses, and the Presbyterians and Methodists organized churches.

While the inhabitants of Denison were still arguing the wisdom of incorporating their town, Vail citizens promptly voted for incorporation. On October 6, 1875, the Denison Review congratulated the town: "Vail, the first incorporated town in Crawford County, is putting on city airs. All its business men are wide awake and full of vim. Its steam mill, erected by John Short is almost completed. A brewery will shortly be in operation."

With the settlement of Germans at Westside, the town began to move ahead. H. C. Laub of Denison established a store, and a hotel was built. Vail, just six miles away, soon had a rival in sports as well as in business, for it was not long until the baseball teams of the two towns were playing hotly contested annual games. In 1874 the newspaper records that the Westside "Free and Easies" defeated Vail 45 to 44. Later, as new towns came into existence, baseball teams were as much a part of their lives as their Main Streets. In 1875, Westside had a population close to three hundred and a G. A. R. post of 30 members.

Business was thriving in the town in 1875 and 1876. The steam mill, which ground 85,000 bushels of wheat and 40,000 bushels of other grain, was running constantly. Smith and Gary -- grain, livestock, and coal dealers -- did a $75,000 business and gave steady employment to 15 men. A farm implement concern was active and in 1876 the owner conducted a trial of sulky plows on the J. J. Woolhiser farm so that farmers could see them in action. German immigrants

poured into the town, attracted by the favorable reports of the German farmers who had settled nearby. When Westside was incorporated in 1879 it had become pronouncedly German in character. In 1889 the Germans of Westside organized a Germania Verein, and in the following year built a Germania Hall in which many community affairs were held.

While Westside was being Germanized, the community surrounding Vail was settled by Catholic families, many of them Irish, who had come to invest in the good cheap land at the urging of Father Scanlon of Dewitt, Iowa. A cyclone destroyed the first Catholic Church in 1899, but it was replaced by St. Ann's, the largest church in the county. During this period the Vail Observer (the oldest newspaper in the county outside of Denison) was founded by G. A. W. Davidson.

Vail business men gained a reputation for top-notch town loyalty since they were willing, as Frederick Meyers expressed it, in his History of Crawford County, to "expend lung power or their last dollar for their beloved town." Both Vail and Westside were pictured as flourishing towns in The North and West Illustrated, a Northwestern Railroad Guide published in the eighties. Both towns were given padded populations, but the school, two grain elevators, the flouring mill, and a 36-room hotel were mentioned as features of Westside. Little was said about Vail, but the description of its location was true, "elevated rolling prairie where the blue-stem grass grows from four to six feet high."

Westside and Vail were both lively towns when the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul was surveyed through the county during the eighties in the southeastern section of the county, then only lightly populated. Rivalry between Vail and Westside continued while the new towns established along the Milwaukee were getting off to flourishing starts, which in some instances lasted only a few years. Improvement in one town was soon followed by similar improvement in the others.

The friendly rivals continued to grow slowly; exciting events were few and far between. In 1891 a cyclone and a hailstorm struck just north of Vail, inflicting a good deal of damage. It was soon reported in town that hail as big as a man's head had pierced inch-thick boards, and that heavy steel tires were stripped smoothly from wagon wheels and twisted into odd shapes. The cyclone, only a few rods wide in area, destroyed the Patrick Mulheron home near Vail and injured Mrs. Mulheron severely. Crops were ruined and considerable property was destroyed in its path. In December of 1897 a freak accident wrecked the Northwestern Overland Flyer No. 1 at Vail. A mail sack, swung from the Flyer, hit

the switch target squarely and threw the switch. The entire train of seven cars turned turtle and 19 persons were injured.

The two sturdy little towns advanced into the twentieth century with no serious setbacks, although Westside did lose business when the freight division headquarters was transferred. By 1911 extensive waterworks, good schools, and churches had been built. The brewery at Vail was one of the flourishing businesses and Westside boasted an automobile dealer. A great pride of Westside was its band, one of the oldest uniformed bands in the county. One of the sports enjoyed by the townspeople in 1916 was the annual marksman's contest sponsored by the Hays Township Scheutzverein each year. In that year the contest was held at the Henry Lamp home and John Oeser was the winner.

Westside did not approve of national prohibition in 1918. In its July 4 issue, the Westside Journal said of those who had secured the passage of the bill, "They are nothing but a dirty bunch of leeches and our wise bunch of lawmakers in Washington are just. boneheaded enuf to be roped in by this miserable bunch."

Later that year the signing of the World War Armistice was celebrated in grand style at Westside. Church bells rang and steam whistles blew from early morning until late at night. At two in the afternoon the townspeople, headed by the high school band, staged an impromptu parade through the town. Then the band hurried in school busses to Vail where the two towns celebrated together for several hours. In the evening, 200 torches (left over from old political campaigning days) were unearthed and a parade was staged. Everyone -- townspeople and throngs of their rural neighbors -- joyously tramped through the streets and pranced around a huge bonfire until the dance at the Opera House began. The streets were lined with hastily decorated cars, about fifty of them having followed the band over from Westside.

At Westside, in 1926, Crawford County's biggest annual event, the horse show, was held for the first time. It started in that year as a draft colt and baby beef exhibition. Frank Hoffman, founder of the show, exhibited a saddle horse -- the only one there. But in 1941 not a single draft colt was shown and baby beef entries were of secondary interest. Saddle horses -- "Society nags", jumpers, and hunters -- had in the intervening years all but obscured the exhibition's original purpose. Iowa's assistant secretary of agriculture Harry Linn said of the 1941 show: "There isn't another show like it in the United States." It included entries from Des Moines, Sioux City, Marshalltown, Boone, Westside, Sac City, and other Iowa towns, as well as Omaha, Lincoln, and Bennington, Nebraska.

In a few short years the Westside saddle and society horse show had grown to rank among the first in the United States in attendance and local interest for such events, exhibiting the best horses in the area, some of which would easily bring up to $3,000 each. To Frank Hoffman belongs a major share of the credit for promoting the interest in society horse shows which sprang up all over Iowa. In 1941 the State ranked first in the United States in the number of registered saddle horses.

In 1867 S. E. Dow was made postmaster of Crawford, the post office established on his homestead. By this time he had served as county judge and managed the affairs of the county well, but his chief interest remained the community in which he lived.

When the Northwestern Railroad was extended through Dow's homestead en route to Council Bluffs, a station was erected and called Crawford to conform with the post office. S. E. Dow and the Blair Town Lot and Land Company laid out the town of Crawford around this station in October 1869. The railroad station drew other enterprises and Crawford was soon a lively village with a Baptist church, a school, and several stores. George Rae, one of the first teachers in the school, arrived with his bride on the construction train, the first to puff into Crawford. He farmed in addition to teaching the village school. In 1871, a few years after his arrival, railroad business averaged around $355 a month.

The townspeople, in appreciation of Mr. and Mrs. Dow's interest in the town, renamed it Dowville in April of 1872 and had the post office and station name changed to correspond. By this time a Latter Day Saints Church had been organized with 48 members. George Montagne was the presiding elder.

Dowville, with only seven houses, was making lively progress during its third year, 1873. There was another store, a livery stable, a drug store, a cheese factory, a grain, stock, and lumber business, a Presbyterian and a Methodist church. Because one farmer nearby had a thousand sheep there was talk of building a combination grist and woolen mill. That year the town held a big Fourth of July celebration near the cheese factory. Ice cream, lemonade, oratory, and two dances provided entertainment to suit the tastes of the crowd. The next year a grain elevator, millinery shop, and a harness shop added to the impressiveness of the village's main street. There was one hotel, the Boyer Valley House.

The little town had grown enough by 1876 to attract mention in the Council Bluffs Nonpareil. That paper listed

the above businesses and referred in addition to three dry-goods stores and a flouring mill. It also noted that Dow owned the elevator, the lumberyard, the agricultural warehouse, and the cheese factory besides 1,500 acres of farm land. Dow continued to father his namesake town until his death in 1907, but his investments in the little village eventually cost him most of his wealth.

From its beginning Dowville was interested in cultural activities. Friday evening was lyceum night in the village as soon as the building of the schoolhouse provided a place to meet. Interest was so lively that only unusually bad weather kept the building from being filled. In 1876 the townspeople contributed $230 toward books for a public library and in 1879 the town was renamed Dow City. It had grown so that the postmaster, a Mr. Lewis, was crowded in his one-room post office, and a new building had to be erected. This was of two stories, the top floor for a town hall.

Things went well with the village until the 1880's. At that time the Milwaukee Railroad missed Dow City by two miles, and Arion was established at the junction where the Milwaukee crossed the Northwestern. It was a blow to the former village but the businesses were too well established to be moved bodily to the new town site. The growth of Dow City was stunted when railroad publicity boomed Arion, but Arion in turn had a setback when Manilla was established only a few years later. The firm of Dow and Graves suffered great financial loss that crippled Dow City, for their affairs and the welfare of the town were closely interwoven. In spite of the setback, E. E. Nichols founded the Dow City Clipper, a weekly newspaper, in 1888. Three years later he sold out to A. H. Rudd who changed the name to the Enterprise.

Throughout the next decade fire struck at the town often. In 1891, the Dow Flouring Mill burned, and in 1895 one fire destroyed the furniture and hardware stores and a second one the hotel. In 1889 a fire which consumed the village jail burned an unidentified stranger who had been confined there for drunkenness.

Twice during the early 1900's, fire destroyed buildings in Dow City but the greatest disaster came when H. S. Green's Exchange Bank failed in 1904, taking many in the town and the surrounding community down with it. The loss in savings alone was estimated at $60,000. The townspeople refused to quit, however. Another bank, a branch of the one in Denison, was established, and the people voted for installation of an excellent waterworks and fire-fighting equipment. In spite of its troubles, the village gained in population and had 541 inhabitants in 1905.

In 1910 the population dropped to 462, due no doubt to the troubles of the town, but in the following years the figure slowly increased. By 1911 the town was again on a good business basis and had many attractive homes and one of the most beautiful city parks in the county.

Dow City continued to grow steadily and in 1940 the town's population was 642, while the county as a whole lost more than four hundred.

Most of the World War veterans in the village were members of the Rainbow Division and saw action in France. Upon their return to Dow City, the Dow City Post No. 444 of the American Legion was formed.

Westside and Vail, prosperous as they were, were outdistanced in population by the towns that sprang up during the 1880's. When the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad was surveyed through southeastern Crawford County there were few settlers in that part of the county except at Dowville. Railroad officials started a number of stations along the line and platted towns for them but these were all outdistanced by Manilla, founded as the head of the Sioux City division.

Astor, Aspinwall, and Arion, all created about 1881, remained tiny villages. Aspinwall, in the far southeastern corner, was a flourishing trading point for a few years. Astor too got off to a promising start. Numerous businesses were opened there and even Denison recognized the commercial importance of this new town by establishing the Astor Shortcut, a road from Denison to Astor. The Milwaukee had first planned its route through Denison, but the town leaders, not seeing the value of another railroad there, refused to give a right-of-way. The Milwaukee officials then swerved their road across the Northwestern and established Arion at the intersection.

Arion flourished for a few years, enough at least to retard the growth of Dow City, only two miles distant. When the Illinois Central went through Arion in 1899, the town again achieved importance this time as the junction point of three railroads. A newspaper was hopefully begun but its life was short. With the arrival of the third railroad Arion became a convenient way-station for vagabonds and criminals and the local officials were not able to handle them. A deputy sheriff from Denison lived at Arion from 1902 until 1908 and preserved peace. Arion citizens themselves then gained control of the rough element and the deputy was withdrawn.

Arion deserves special mention for reviving the county fairs which Denison promoters had given up in 1899. In

1907, Arion revived the Crawford County Agricultural Association, and county fairs were held at the Arion Fairgrounds for many years afterward.

Fire struck a blow at the little town in 1909, burning the big Arion Mercantile Store and several other businesses. Not all of these were re-established. The three churches founded in the town during its initial boom struggled along separately until 1909, when the members decided that one union church would best serve the village. The Methodist, Baptist, and Christian congregations then united and affiliated themselves with the Congregational denomination. A Union Sunday School was started, and the new Union Church flourished.

A year later the new county farm home was established two miles east of Arion and the county's poor were moved into its more comfortable quarters. About this time Arion formed an independent school district and erected a school. The town remained a neat, pleasant village clustered around a network of tracks. The 1940 population was 271. By 1941, the railroads had abandoned their three separate stations for one common depot.

In 1882 the Illinois Central and Northwestern railroads were extended through Deloit but their coming failed to transform the village into a bustling town and, in the words of F. W. Meyers, editor of the Denison Review, did not rob it of "its dear quaintness... its characteristic charm." The business men did move the business district from Main Street to Wolf Street at the foot of the hill where the Central and Northwestern stations were built, but the mother town of the county seemed content with its old fashioned ways and did not strive to modernize itself. A newspaper, the Deloit News, was attempted in 1900, but its publication period was brief.

In 1911 Meyers wrote, "Deloit is a beautiful, restful little place. It has no very rich and no very poor... One must be careful in Deloit how he speaks of any man, for it is almost sure that he is at least talking of a cousin."

In 1913 a savings bank was organized that served the community until 1934. In 1923 a few brick buildings were erected in the business district, but most of the homes were small, varying in style from those of 60 years ago to a few modern bungalows.

In 1941 the little village was still holding its own against some of its newer rivals and was one of the communities that showed a slight gain in population in 1940, when its inhabitants numbered 281.

When the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad decided on its extension to Sioux City during the later eighties, Astor had hoped to be the point at which the extension began. For some unknown reason the officials started the extension a few miles to the north, and founded the town of Manilla. The boundaries were fixed on November 21, 1887, and the railroad company soon built a roundhouse, a coaling station, repair shops, and an eating house. The town, situated at the head of the Sioux City division of the Milwaukee, almost at once drew railroad employees as the basis of its population. It developed rapidly and soon had a well-built business block. In five years, the townspeople enjoyed a municipally owned waterworks, and in seven years they felt prosperous enough to erect a city hall.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were more than a hundred railroad employees living at Manilla, already one of the larger towns in the county, and the Manilla Times was a year old. When the Milwaukee was extended to the Pacific Coast and plans were made to double-track it, the citizens were confident the town was headed toward a population of from three to five thousand. Although their hopes were never quite fulfilled, Manilla was prosperous. The numerous sidetracks, warehouses, and other activities connected with the railroad roundhouse gave employment to many men and made it possible for the townspeople to build attractive residences and erect substantial churches.

By the time Manilla had celebrated its twenty-fifth birthday, in 1902, it had become a good trading point as well as a railroad center. The cement street crossings, the gas illuminated streets, and the miles of brick and cement walks now gave outward evidence of the town's prosperity. Seven years later, the townspeople erected an attractive brick post office, and during the next year welcomed the newly established telephone exchange and voted to enfranchise an electric light company.

In the succeeding decades Manilla easily held its place as second in importance in the county with a population of 1,040 in 1940. From an early date the town was conspicuous for its public and civic improvements. In 1915 the community spent $50,000 on a school, and by 1940 the Manilla National Bank had a capital and surplus of $37,000 while its resources were listed at more than a third of a million dollars.

A neighbor of Manilla's, founded after it had been platted, was Buck Grove, a small incorporated village in the center of Washington Township. The village always had a

strong civic pride, expressed in neat homes, cement sidewalks, three churches, and a good school. The village was ambitious, but it had rivals too close to develop into more than a thriving village which never had exceeded a hundred in population.

In the 1920's the village of Kenwood, which had been established in 1888, was proudly claiming to be the biggest little town in Iowa. The village was Charter Oak's nearest neighbor until Ricketts and Berne were started on an extension of the Northwestern about 1900. Kenwood remained a tiny but progressive village, even establishing the Kenwood Savings bank in 1914 with a capital of $25,000.

CHAPTER 8

CHARTER OAK, SCHLESWIG, KIRON

When the Milwaukee extended its line across Charter Oak Township, there were no towns in the western part of the county, which had once been a part of Monona County. The settlement around O. M. Criswell's farmhouse, consisting of a store, a blacksmith shop, and several houses, had a post office (Charter Oak) and was served by the mail route between Denison and Sioux City. But it was not a platted town. Criswell had sold a portion of his farm to the railroad for a town site in 1887. The sale of town lots was brisk because that section of the county needed a good trading center. The old Oak store was moved from the Criswell farm to the new townsite and became the first building in the town.

While Manilla was growing in the southeastern part of the county, Charter Oak flourished in the northwestern section. It was a progressive town, closely connected with the farmers in its vicinity. Throughout its history, much of the land has been owned by farmers. After three years, the town was incorporated and plans for a waterworks were under way. In July 1894 the town was cut off from the rest of the county for a week by a cyclone and hailstorm which made the roads impassable even for the mail. The resourceful editor of the Charter Oak Times printed that week's issue on wrapping paper. E. S. Plimpton was the first one in the county to use electric lights, which he provided for his mill from a small private plant in 1893.

During the early 1900's, when the extension of the Northwestern brought the towns of Schleswig and Kiron into existence, farmers near Charter Oak were moving into the town and turning over the management of their farms to their sons; most of them, however, went out to the farm every day to help the boys out. Their thriftiness, which had made the farms prosper, was later expressed in their participation in town affairs. They were quick to take advantage of improvements that increased the prosperity of the town. A telephone was established in March of 1900, and an extensive waterworks and a gas lighting plant were municipally owned.

In 1911 Charter Oak people liked to boast of their pure water supply and invited visitors to enjoy a drink of their water, which was always cool and refreshing no matter how hot the day. The secret lay in the large concrete reservoir set in the hill above the town so that the water was never above the ground. They were proud too of their walks, homes, streets, schools, and their churches, all of which indicated that Charter Oak was an alert, well-kept town. Although the

town was small, with only 776 inhabitants in 1940, it supported three schools -- the eight-room public school, the Lutheran School, and the St. Boniface Catholic School. The German Lutheran Church at this time had the largest congregation, but the St. Boniface Church on its four-acre plot was the largest building.

As in other towns in the county, baseball was a popular sport. From 1921 to 1923 the Charter Oak team was made up of professional hometown men, but in 1923 it won 60 per cent of the games played, defeating some of the finest teams in the county. It amassed a profit of $1,000, which was divided equally among the team members at the end of the season.

Charter Oak continued to be a favored trading point, its merchants alert to the changing demands of its rural customers. Among the businesses in town during the 1920's was the Farmers' Store, Inc., owned by a stock company composed almost entirely of farmers. The merchandise offered would have done credit to a much larger town. The Farmers' State Bank and the Farmers' Grain Company were also strong businesses. All of the stores were prospering in 1924, the year when the Homer Hall Post of the American Legion sponsored the first Klondike Day celebration. This affair was so successful that it was continued as an annual celebration on the town's calendar.

In 1932, Homer Hall Post celebrated a Golden Jubilee with many festivities, including a balloon ascension, baseball games at the Soft Ball Park, and all the excitement of a carnival midway. The streets were thronged with people who enjoyed the din made by the merry-go-round, the Ferris wheel, the hawkers calling their wares, and the people visiting together. The grade school students participated in a track meet at the close of the school year, and the schools in that section took part in the Rural Music Contest.

Business, too, was expanding at this time. A new telephone company was organized, and the Charter Oak Hatchery on March 30 set a record hatch of 6,666 eggs to supply the growing business of poultry-raising. On Wednesdays the farmers who came to town visited the Charter Oak Sales Barn whether or not they wanted to buy or sell.

Townspeople, too, drifted around to the sales barn on Wednesdays to see who were selling horses or buying cultivators. That was the year the Kluver Bowling Alley, an old frame landmark in the town, burned. The firemen, fearing the fire would spread to nearby buildings and destroy a large part of the business section, sent a hurry call to the nearby town of Ricketts. The two departments, working together, soon had the fire under control.

Ricketts was one of the group of smaller towns that sprang up when the Northwestern Railroad inaugurated its Wall Lake and Mondamin line in 1899. Ricketts had an almost exclusively German population from the beginning, populated by the retired German farmers in this district and by Germans directly from abroad. A Farmers' Savings Bank was organized in 1901 when the town was only a few years old. In 1911, according to Meyers' History of Crawford County, Ricketts was the most pretentious of the smaller towns. Four years before, its business district had been almost entirely wiped out by fire, but the section had been rebuilt at once. The town, though it listed but 167 inhabitants, was a wide-awake community.

Another German town established on this extension of the railroad was Schleswig, named for a province in Germany. Schleswig, however, was an outgrowth of the earlier trading post of Hohenzollern, the post office of this German farming community. Some people said that the fine German farms in this section prompted the railroad to build this part of Crawford County. The town was prosperous from the first. People crowded the cornfield where the town was staked out in May, 1899, eager to buy lots and able to pay good prices. The lot on which the Baxter Reed & Company bank was built brought $600. Not long afterward, Jergen Schrolder moved the post office building at Hohenzollern from its old location to Schleswig, and in 1890 the town had a population of 230 persons who almost immediately incorporated their town and elected its first mayor. Before the year ended a Schleswig Opera Company was organized, and an Opera House costing $6,000 was erected to provide a public meeting place.

Schleswig became a shipping point at once. Farmers who had had to haul their stock and grain to Denison or Charter Oak found Schleswig a shorter haul. In the early years of the town's history, the surrounding community became a stock-raising center. During the first six years, the farmers shipped in hundreds of carloads of corn to feed stock.

Schleswig had no pioneer period. The business buildings and the homes were substantial and comfortable from the first. Every home had its smooth lawn and flower beds enclosed in neat hedges, and cement and board walks soon stretched in every direction. Schools and churches reflected the town's prosperity, and modern improvements were taken for granted in every building. By 1909 it was established as one of the good sized towns in the community, with 455 inhabitants. It was during this year that Schleswig held a gala celebration which has been rather sadly remembered: it was followed by a typhoid fever epidemic and 30 who had attended the affair from various parts of the

county were stricken. A number of them died. The fever was remembered long after the cause of the celebration was forgotten.

Stock shipping played an influential part in establishing the town's prosperity. In 1910 one buyer shipped 135 carloads of livestock. Of these 150 carloads held 10,190 hogs which averaged 242 pounds, for which the buyer paid $242,774.43.

In 1911 Schleswig was rated one of the richest towns of its size in Iowa. Meyers said, in his History of Crawford County: "Schleswig may well boast itself as being the most uniformly beautiful of any of the new towns of Iowa." The town then was almost entirely German, with only one or two English-speaking homes in the community. The local telephone exchange had 350 subscribers and there were two banks, a movie, and a cigar factory in addition to the usual businesses. The local paper, the Schleswig Leader, was well established and the local furniture store was the largest one in either Crawford or Ida counties. The fire department with 20 members, had a reservoir supply of 65,000 gallons of water to depend on. The town was one of the most orderly in the State and although it had four saloons the village jail was seldom used.

Schleswig retained its German characteristics for many years. During the World War many of its young men saw service, and upon their return the Hi Line Post 179 of the American Legion was organized.

It became the custom for many in the county to drive up to Schleswig to watch the activities of the annual "Shipping Day." The stock feeders took their herds to Schleswig on that day, driving them to the stockyards if their farms were near the town, otherwise hauling them by truck so that they could be shipped to the International Livestock Show at Chicago, Illinois. Hundreds of visitors thronged the streets to watch the loadings of the sleek stock, fattened to prime beeves from Texas, Nebraska, and Colorado calves.

Each year as the watchers saw the cattle loaded they made wagers among themselves as to which bunches would pass the "sifting committee" at Chicago and get into the exhibition ring.

In 1939 three trains were taken to Carroll, Iowa, where they were added to other trainloads to make a "beef special." Forty-five carloads were shipped from Schleswig -- 13 of Aberdeen Angus and 32 of Herefords. The abundance of grass and feed that year had put the cattle into prime condition.

On July 27, 28, and 29, 1939, the town celebrated its fortieth anniversary with a carnival entertainment. In addition to the shows, dances, and concessions, the Schleswig state championship high school band gave a number of concerts. To publicize this event, the business men had sent out a caravan of 25 cars which traveled 300 miles and visited 21 towns. In the caravan were the band and 60 boosters. In 1920 Schleswig had 655 inhabitants; the 1940 population was 628.

Neighbor to Schleswig, and established by the Northwestern Railroad during the same year, is Kiron, center of the Swedish settlement in the county. The town is the outgrowth of Old Kiron, a small village clustered around a post office, a store, and a school. Mail was carried to this post office from Deloit in 1873, only a few years after the first Swedish farmers settled in this vicinity. In 1899 when the Wall Lake and Mondamin branch of the Northwestern was built through this area, dispute with the town authorities prompted the railroad officials to locate the station of Kiron several miles away from the Old Kiron settlement. A town was platted and a sale of town lots was held in August. There was a general exodus from the Old Kiron to the new town, though some of the older settlers remained in Old Kiron even after the new town grew.

There are several stories as to how Kiron got its name. According to one it came from the brook, Kidron, mentioned in the Bible (but with the "d" dropped for euphony); but another source says that Kidron is the name of a settlement in Manchuria.

Two months after the Kiron Sentinel published its first issue in March 1900, the town was incorporated. The Council members elected to carry on the affairs of the village held their first meeting in the waiting room of the Chicago and Northwestern depot. During the next year the town lost the Mauritz Brothers' Hotel and the Auchstetter saloon by fire, a grain elevator, however, had been built and Peter Nord and N. P. Swanson were buying stock. The loss of the hotel was offset by the erection of an Opera House in 1902, sponsored by the Kiron Hall Association, and the building of the Farmer Lumber and Coal Company in 1903. The townspeople and the farmers in the surrounding communities soon found good trading opportunities at Kiron and the little town grew slowly.

Early in the 1900's Kiron, like other towns in Crawford County, increased its population when pioneer farmers retired and moved in. Among these was John A. Erickson who had come to the county during the sixties. Back in the days when the prairie grass grew six feet tall, he had been lost in a storm on this very site. He was hauling logs from the

Boyer River to one of his pastures so that he could have them when he needed them the following summer. He had just finished hauling the third load when it began to snow. By the time he had dumped the last log of that load in his pasture, the snow was falling fast and the wind was rising. Home was five miles away across an unmarked prairie. Confident that the oxen would find a way, he turned them in that direction, tied a sack around his head to protect himself from the freezing cold, grasped the reins in one hand and a stake on the sled in the other and set out walking. The storm increased, but he felt relieved when he crossed a bridge he had built over a creek that ran through his land. The oxen, however, instead of going home, followed the path of the storm and drifted into the cornfield where Kiron was later platted. It was then that Erickson realized he was lost. He stopped the oxen, established his position as best he could, and turned the oxen in the likeliest direction he could guess. Fortunately his guess was right. It snowed during the next three days and nights, and the Ericksons were snow-bound. Erickson recalled, too, that the sod house he had made in November 1868 burned only a few months later, destroying all that he and his wife owned.

Many of Kiron's population were sturdy pioneers who had weathered the hard times. They were deeply interested in the little town's welfare. Among them was Andrew Norelius who served old and new Kiron as postmaster for 18 years before he relinquished the job to another. Norelius also served as secretary of the Kiron Farmers Mutual Insurance Association for 25 years, and was one of the best known old pioneers. These pioneers were joined by a group of younger settlers who were also interested in the welfare of the town. In 1908 A. E. Anderson, who was well known to the rural housewives north and west of Kiron, abandoned his peddler's wagon to establish a general store at Kiron, and his former patrons supported him in his venture. About the same time, C. S. Billings bought the drug store and soon had become so much a part of the town that he was made postmaster about 1911. At this time the largest building in the town was the Swedish Baptist Church around which many of the community activities centered. The town did not yet have an adequate fire department but the community was considering an electric light plant.

Kiron did not grow much and life moved along at a leisurely pace. The town in 1940 was one of the quietly prosperous smaller towns in the county, with a population of 340.

Not far away to the east, Kiron had several neighbors that were organized at about the same time. Boyer was started at the junction point where the Mondamin line of the Northwestern joined the Wall Lake division. It was chiefly

a transfer point, but a few houses, a Methodist church, a school, and a town hall were built. Brogan and Ells were stations only a few miles away from Boyer. Brogan was created in 1899, just a few miles from the Ida County line. Ells and Brogan were founded by the Illinois Central, built through the county in 1899 when its tracks paralleled the Northwestern across the county. Neither town grew to any extent. The principal business man of Ells, for whom the village was named, was B. F. Ells. He was postmaster during the period when the hamlet had a post office, and also managed the store and the cream station built there.

After the early 1900's no new villages were established in the county. Although the county gradually lost in population, the towns managed to retain their identities. Several of them with populations of less than a hundred, may become ghost towns, but in 1941 they still clung firmly to existence.

CHAPTER 9

DENISON -- COUNTY SEAT TOWN

Denison began its history as the county seat in the spring of 1856, when only the tent of the Reverend J. W. Denison was pitched in the vacant center where the East and West branches of the Boyer River had their junction. The Reverend Denison, a Baptist minister, had been so impressed with the beauty and the advantages of the geographical location at the junction of the Boyer and East Boyer rivers, that he had purchased 200,000 acres in Harrison and Crawford counties for the Providence Western Land Company; an association that he himself had organized. To secure the county seat on this land, Denison offered to give to the first permanent county judge, John Bassett, a courthouse, a hotel, a store, and several houses if Bassett would name his site the seat of government.

The next year Judge Bassett named the newly platted Denison as the county seat, and the erection of the first courthouse was begun. At this time the county had a population of 256. For almost a decade Judge Bassett, as was within his jurisdiction, managed most of the county business, superintending the fiscal affairs and acting as probate judge, accounting officer, and general agent.

Soon after the proposed town became the county seat in 1857, Jacob Whittinger was made postmaster. During the year Francis Reynolds and John Swain arrived at Denison with a steam flouring mill which had been hauled by wagons drawn by from ten to fifteen yoke of oxen. The mill was put up near the top of a hill on the Boyer, a site which Denison had purchased for several hundred dollars.

By the spring of 1857, the Denison House and a small store had been built diagonally across the street from each other. H. C. Laub was managing the store, which had a stock of goods that had been hauled from Des Moines. There were only a few houses, the several families in the town living at the Denison House, or in the Burnt Woods district just at the top of the divide. J. D. Seagrave and A. F. Bond were among the townspeople.

One balmy spring morning while everyone was at breakfast, a large buffalo bull strolled into Denison. He stalked through the town, walking through wire fences and other obstructions without seeming to notice them at all. Everyone rushed into the street, for most of the people had never seen a buffalo before. They watched excitedly while a number of men peppered his tough hide with rifle shots. The

buffalo majestically crossed the divide between the town and Burnt Woods before John Appleman fired a shot that finally killed him. The Purdys, the Reynoldses, and others living in Burnt Woods heard the shooting, rushed across the divide to see what was wrong, and arrived in time to see the animal killed. The bull, quite thin, had evidently come to the village in the hope of finding food. Horn marks indicated that he was 16 years old. An attempt was made to preserve and stuff the head but it was too large. Almost every family then in the county had a buffalo steak and then one of the men cured the hide and gave almost everyone a halter strap from it.

According to the diary of one of the early settlers it rained for 40 days out of 43 that spring, and the Boyer Rivers spread out from bluff to bluff. Early one morning Swain and Reynolds heard some one shouting for help and, investigating, found their mill almost covered with water, and Benjamin Galland stranded on top of it. His wagon had washed downstream.

It was this spring, too, that an Indian scare made settlers near Ida Grove flee to Mason's Grove. When the report spread, the neighbors "forted-up" at Purdy's Burnt Woods on the night of April 25.

The town was still struggling to get a foothold in September of 1857 when A. S. Wright and his uncle, Ike Goodrich, drove to Denison from Omaha in a lumber wagon. After three days of traveling across the country where there were no roads nor bridges, they forded the East Boyer River and drove up the hill and into town. Wright said there were only four buildings in the village -- the old Denison Hotel with six of its rooms unfinished, a 10 by 16-foot store, a log schoolhouse 16 by 16 feet, and the Bisher house that had only one room lathed. The first school was held during the winter of 1857-58. Judge Ford of Harrison County held the first session of the district court in this log schoolhouse. Before the year ended, the Reverend Denison had organized a Baptist Church in the village, and was preaching.

There was great building activity in 1858. Clay, discovered in the hills north of Denison, was made into brick to build the courthouse, a better schoolhouse, the First Baptist Church, and many residences. At one time during the year 17 carpenters were kept busy on the 15 houses that were under construction. Log cabins were put up out on the prairie, too, as farmers settled near the town.

The courthouse was finished in 1859, and in the following year Denison decided that the county needed a newspaper. A hand press was freighted across the prairie, and the first issue of the Boyer Valley Record was circulated among the

settlers on October 1. The publication, however, lasted only a year and a half. Isaac Allen and H. H. Crowell had a quarrel in the printing office, and Allen was killed. This ended all attempts to publish a newspaper until after the Civil War.

Just before the war Denison was a hardworking, hopeful little village of perhaps 150 people. Supplies were hauled from Fort Des Moines or from Council Bluffs. The town was on no definite post route until 1861 when it was on the way between Fort Dodge and Council Bluffs, with mail service once every three weeks. From 1862 to 1864 mail arrived once a week, but there was no other contact with the more settled parts of the State unless a new settler arrived between mails and brought the news.

During this period of isolation the courthouse was the only building that could be used as a public meeting place. The unfinished second floor was in turn a lecture room, church auditorium, Sunday school, and banquet room. One of the most hotly discussed questions of the time was whether or not the courthouse should be used for dancing. One year the county officials allowed "allemande right and allemande left" to hold sway in the second floor room, but the storm of protests prevented its future use for such festivities.

Throughout the early years there was little to distinguish Denison from the other villages, except for the fact that it was the county seat and nearly everyone visited it at some time or other during the year to attend to their affairs at the courthouse. The county officers, of course, lived at Denison, and infrequent sessions of the court were held there, but the townspeople struggled as hard to get along as did those in the other villages. The merchants often taught school, surveyed land, or farmed a bit, and the county officers plowed land and cut timber. Living in town meant splitting wood for home use, or splitting rails for fences, just as in the country. Both the town and the country folk were equally interested in the project of a county fair, and worked together to bring about the first of such fairs, which was held in October in 1860, in front of the courthouse. A large crowd came to look at the displays of vegetables and grain, and to examine the cattle tied to the fence around the courthouse square. Horse races were held in the street.

About the same time the first county fair was held at Denison, the first crime case was tried. When two of H. C. Laub's horses were stolen, Sheriff John Vore and three deputies pursued and overtook Joel and Sidney Yeoman who had the horses. The two men fled and hid in the bushes and high grass, but Joel was captured, taken before County Judge Bassett, and committed to Fort Madison. S. J. Comfort, the

first lawyer to practice in the county, was allowed $2.50 for prosecuting the horse thief. Sidney was never taken.

After the Civil War, H. C. Laub got the contract to build the first telegraph from Boone to Council Bluffs. This gave many of the townspeople and some of the farmers a chance to earn money by hauling and setting up poles. The telegraph instruments were installed in the office of Morris McHenry, the county treasurer and, beginning on November 1, 1865, he served as the first telegraph operator.

By this time the Cedar Rapids and Missouri Railroad (later the Northwestern) was slowly approaching Denison. Some of the merchants were erecting a few buildings to prepare for the big rush of business that would soon follow. When the railroad finally reached the town in the latter part of 1865, the townspeople were virtually swallowed by the surging mass of Irish railroad workers, the supervising engineers, the adventurers, and the new settlers who arrived and stayed during the few months when the town was the railroad terminal. Denison then became an important center for the surrounding counties. Settlers in Ida, Monona, Shelby, and Pottawattamie counties drove in to see the railroad and to ride on it. Mail routes to Monona County, to Harlan, and to Odebolt were established, and there was tri-weekly stage service to Boone and Jefferson.

The authorities were not able to cope with the harum-scarum newcomers who knew that for them Denison was only a temporary terminal of the railroad. Teamsters who drove freight wagons from the end of the railroad to Sioux City joined the motley throng. Although all the land deeds contained a clause that no saloons could be built on property in the town, a good half dozen sprang up and ran with little or no restraint. Brawls were frequent, and the hard working railroad men often lost all of their week's pay in the gambling houses on Saturday nights.

When the railroad builders had arrived within walking distance of the town, people strolled out to watch the Irish laborers grading the path of the railroad by the slow process of hauling wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow of dirt and dumping it along the surveyor's line, building roadbed that the first spring flood could seep away. The Irish, imported to do the work, laid the flimsy 56-pound rails upon ties that were none too strong. Modern railroad builders dub the old tracks "two streaks of rust and a right of way."

The small engines of the early railroads could haul only five or six of the little wooden passenger coaches, which were heated in winter by tiny wood-burning stoves. An engine pulling ten or twelve carloads of cattle was heavily

loaded and it took two nights and a day to go from Council Bluffs to Chicago. Sometimes snow delayed a train for several weeks. For 22 days in March, 1867, only one train was able to get into Denison from the east because of the heavy snow.

During these years little money in the county had been deposited in the treasurer's office, which had the only safe in the county. But on December 11, 1866, the safe was broken open and robbed of $91. The robbers were never discovered, and thereafter the county funds were deposited at Chicago, Illinois.

The army of railroad laborers and officials deserted Denison as the road progressed to Council Bluffs, and when the boom population was gone the town found itself with barely more than 300 inhabitants.

The county had not had a newspaper of any sort since the tragic end of the Boyer Valley Record with the death of Allen in 1860, and now two men, M. H. Money and G. W. Stephens, started the Denison Review. Though it changed hands several times the Review met better fortune than its predecessor had and became a prominent part of the life of the county until it was sold to R. W. McNeal in 1875. The Review had its first rival when the Bulletin began publication in 1873.

Denison was still a village, with village interests, although the railroad that touched the southern edge of the town and then looped southward to Council Bluffs made it the county trading point as well. Toward the close of 1869, the Magnolia Star, in Harrison County, wrote:

"Denison occupies a beautiful tract of upland and is a thriving and sprightly town; has a neat brick courthouse which would be an honor to older and more densely populated counties, two churches, Methodist and Baptist. The church buildings are good."

Twenty-four businesses were listed, including two agricultural warehouses and two grain warehouses. These businesses, in frame buildings for the most part, were scattered along Main Street. The lumberyards and grain warehouses clustered around the Northwestern depot. The flouring mill and sawmill were down by the river. The older inhabitants began to see strangers in town, new German neighbors who were migrating from Scott and Clinton counties to find opportunities in a town just beginning to grow. They also saw many Swedish and German farmers, who paused in Denison only long enough to buy farm land in the northern part of the county.

With its new Swedish and German immigrants swelling the population, the county felt growing pains that soon showed in the inadequacy of the courthouse. A frame addition was added to the old brick building in 1871 and this addition became popularly known as the "wart." Land agents other than the Reverend Denison were now booming the county. Both the Railroad Land Company and the American Emigrant Company, which had taken over some of the swamplands, had agents at Denison. In 1875 they sold 10,000 acres.

During the 1870's the German influence became predominant in the village and as the population increased the interests of the town changed. Civic improvements were urged and county fairs were resumed. The Fair Association erected a worthy exhibition place, Floral Hall, on the newly purchased Fairground at the west edge of town. The land was neatly fenced and a half-mile race track was built so that the fair could compete with the nearby Nebraska State Fair at Omaha.

The problem of sidewalks became as much a matter of public concern in 1873 as cement roads did in the 1920's. A sidewalk association was formed to build a walk from Main Street down Broadway to Locust, and then down Locust to the depot. The Northwestern Railroad and the Providence Western Land Company each donated a hundred dollars to start the work. The lumber arrived on May 13, and the board sidewalk was begun. Since there was no established grade, the walks dipped up and down and unfamiliar strangers had to watch their steps to avoid sudden surprises. The walk on the east side of Main Street was high above the road and had a long flight of stairs leading down to Broadway.

This year too, grasshoppers devoured the gardens in the town as they had the year before. Not even the blade of an onion was left when their voracious appetites were satisfied and they flew to greener fields. About this time a Cemetery Association bought the cemetery, and a little later there were complaints that it had not been fenced. Cattle and horses cropped the cemetery grass and trampled the graves, sometimes knocking the tombstones over.

The business and industrial section of the town grew healthily. In 1874 alone a new warehouse, a grain elevator, a mill, and the two-story McHenry Hall were erected. The first floor of the hall was used by the bank, and the second floor for the social, political, and theatrical gatherings of the community. In addition, a Catholic church and a number of homes were built. The following year the business men of the town formed the Denison Protective Association to provide a night watchman for the business section. The men subscribed about $500 to pay a monthly salary to a night

watchman whose duties were to keep a lookout for fires and burglars. A Mr. Holst, the first watchman, served for a number of years. At this time soap, cheese, bricks, and agricultural implements were being manufactured. J. P. Mueller in this year hung the first German sign in the business district. It was the year when the high tide of German immigration began, and 67 carloads of German household and farm goods were unloaded in a short time.

The cultural life of the town broadened also. Lyceums, at which a given subject for debate was presented by a selected sextet, were still a drawing card, but theatrical presentations by home talent groups became more popular, and the interest in political events grew keener. With the coming of the music-loving Germans a wide variety of musical instruments became available for the home talent programs. One historian remarks, concerning the year 1873, there were "twenty-four organs, seven pianos, and two melodeons, not to speak of numerous violins, guitars, banjos, brass horns, and cats."

In September, 1875, when Grady's Circus came to town, several thousand people were on hand to see the parade and the afternoon show. It proceeded happily except for the balloon ascension, which high winds prevented. A rain storm lasting all night stopped the evening performance. About fifteen or twenty of the circus men left the show to have a "high old time" in town and went to Ed Trowbridge's Billiard Hall where they enjoyed billiards and drinking for a while.

According to the Denison Review for September 17, 1875, "this soon began to get noisy, and those who did not belong to their crowd began to get back into the corners out of their way. It was evident that a big fight was brewing, and quite a number left the hall... When it became apparent that the town people were thinning out, the showmen began to mutter angry threats that they would clean out the d---d town."

Trouble began in the bar-room, adjoining the billiard hall. This room was long, but scarcely wide enough to let two men pass. When William Hubbell came in, the showmen attempted to shove him out. The scuffle took them out into the billiard room where Hubbell succeeded in knocking several of the circus men down before one of them struck him on the head with a billiard cue. Several of them then kicked and pounded him until he managed to escape. He was taken to the Greenough and Bullock drug store to have his head bound. The showmen then turned on Isaac Jones and struck him with a billiard ball. They fought until Jones was badly bruised, and several of the circus men were hurt. After these men had been taken to Kirk's drug store and had

their wounds dressed, they started across the street toward the Greenough and Bullock drug store. When they saw Hubbell just ready to come out, the fight began again. Several of the showmen were thrown bodily out of the store, but several others managed to get in. Some one fired a gun, and the drug store door was shut and the lights turned out.

The showmen outside shot into the store and slivered the glass, and those inside tried to rob the money drawer. Greenough and Bullock succeeded in driving the showmen out through the back door, but during the fight an oil lamp was knocked over and one side of the store took fire. In spite of the fact that the light from the blazing fire made him a good target, Greenough seized a broom and beat it out. Two of the bullets shot at him barely missed his head. The men inside the store fired about ten shots in quick succession and wounded three of the showmen. One of them, shot three times, was taken to the Burke House, but the other two went on with the show.

The Denison Review concludes its account with the remark, "The greatest wonder after the fight was over, was that no one but the showmen got shot -- none of the citizens or country men being hurt during the fight with pistols. Only three whole panes of glass were left in front of the store and the heavy glass in both show cases was smashed to pieces, while many of the fine glass-covered display cases were badly damaged." Such a fray belongs to the pioneer days when law enforcement was stinted both by popular sentiment and equipment. The conservative people were none too prepared, and many of the citizens enjoyed a good fight. Officers of the law were few in number.

Happier events of the year were the formation of the Library Association and J. Fred Meyer's purchase of the Denison Review in 1875. He edited the paper for a good many years and in 1911 wrote a vivid history of the county. Laub and Hayne, general merchants, gave the housewives their first taste of "to your door service" when they bought a delivery wagon and the ladies no longer had to lug their purchases home.

During the presidential election of 1876, the Hayes and Wheeler Minutemen staged a torchlight parade with 70 torches in the procession, martial music, and flag bearers. Joined by a cheering crowd, they marched to Mayor Bond's house and congregated on the lawn to hear and applaud the speeches and music in the wavering shadows cast by the flaming, smoking torches.

At the close of the seventies the town was booming. The Northwestern was still the only railroad in the county,

and Denison was the chief shipping center. During the last four months of 1879, shippers had sent out 454 carloads of grain and 54 of stock, and 137 carloads of lumber had been shipped in. Die Denison Zeitung was established in 1879 as a German edition of the Denison Review. Both papers were under the direct editorial control of Frederick Meyer. The German Mutual Insurance Association was organized at C. J. Holling's home on December 29. This company sold fire, lightning, tornado, and windstorm protection to the German farmers of Crawford and Ida counties. Fifteen years later, it had 389 members and carried $450,903 in risks. In 1910, it boasted 1,650 members and carried $6,228,425 in risks.

The Denison Review published a boom edition at the close of 1879 and reported, "Denison is a village of 1,500 inhabitants; we have no municipal or school debts, and we have two schoolhouses with ample facilities for six schools. We have six churches, all very nearly free from debt; German Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian."

Denison citizens had more time in the 1880's and 1890's to develop some of the phases of town life that had been neglected during the earlier days. Social organizations developed, especially among the German citizens. In 1881 the Germania Verein was organized to unify the German people and provide a suitable meeting place for them. This group erected an opera house which served the town as the chief place of amusement for a number of years. In 1887 they built and supervised the German Language School which was conducted by Professor J. F. Harthun until he became editor of the Zeitung.

CHAPTER 10

THE LATTER YEARS

During the early 1880's Denison made what some historians have called one of its big mistakes. When the Milwaukee Railroad decided to build its line through Crawford County and wanted to route it through Denison, the town leaders voted the proposition down, thinking that the competition of two railroads would hurt business! Then Manilla, a town established by the railroad, became the head of the Milwaukee division.

With population increasing in the county as well as in the town, more room was needed at the courthouse and another addition was built in 1881. This and the older addition did not add to the beauty of the building, and were dubbed "the warts" by those who insisted the county should have a new courthouse, roomy enough to be "wartless."

In 1883, when the county offered a reward of $1,000 to anyone discovering coal in paying quantities, the thoughts of many went back some half dozen years to the county's old coal hoax. W. P. Fox, a supposed geologist, had come in 1876, surveyed the county, and published a report in which he prophesied that coal would be found in numerous places. He chose the Malony farm as the best coal site and persuaded the county board to help him sink a shaft. He stated, "If your honorable body will pay hired help every Saturday night I will see that the hole is put down forthwith. Foreman's pay will be $3 a day, including drilling tools and etc. You can employ your other men to work under my foreman to suit yourselves, and if this hole proves a success then I will leave it to your own generosity what pay I shall have. All I ask is for my board...." The board accepted the offer and the work was pushed vigorously with the optimistic slogan: "China or coal!" But when the drillers struck quicksand instead of coal at 225 feet, the enterprise was abandoned.

The German citizens organized the German Brotherhood in April, 1886. The Brotherhood's membership at first was limited to those who had served in the German Army. Its chief purpose was to promote friendliness among the members and to perpetuate German ideas and the German language among the children who were growing up in a strange country. In later years the Brotherhood included all who were of German descent, and so unified the German influence that it became dominant in Denison.

Other centers of the town's social life were the churches, each of which had its groups of Ladies' Aid or

Willing Workers. These women's organizations served church suppers or sponsored ice cream socials to buy new carpeting for the church, to repair the church steps, to buy a communion set, or to send their share to the missionary fund that provided churches and Sunday schools for those in isolated parts of the United States or for heathens in foreign lands. And they helped along the worthy local cause of providing a wholesome meeting place for the young people.

When the Ladies' Aid met at some home for a quilting bee, the hostess filled platter after platter with thin slices of cold boiled ham, heaped bowls with potato salad, beat up her best sour cream biscuits, cut huge slabs of sponge cake, and dished out a wide assortment of jellies and preserves. The front parlor was carefully cleaned, and each object on the walnut whatnot dusted. When the ladies arrived and began to walk across the ingrain carpet, the thin layer of hay beneath it crackled slightly and sent forth a faint "tea oder." If a telephone was mounted on the wall, the house possessed a very definite distinction.

Telephones came to Denison in November of 1885 and after their installation anyone who wished to spend the 20-cent fee could call a friend as far away as Carroll, and at most of the nearby towns. People at first liked to stand around the switchboard at the Jagger Hotel and watch the operator.

The veterans of the Denison G. A. R. Post, long active in state encampments, returned proudly from the state meeting in 1886. W. A. McHenry had been elected commander of the G. A. R. Department for Iowa.

One of the favorite stories of the G. A. R. was about Abraham Lincoln and Crawford County. For his services in the Black Hawk War, Abraham Lincoln was given a land grant in Iowa, but had never filed his claim. Once, in speaking of this, Lincoln had said that now his sons, Bob and Tod, would have no tangible proof that their father had been a soldier. In 1860 President Buchanan issued a second warrant to Lincoln. Pressed to make a choice, Lincoln accepted the advice of his friend Grenville M. Dodge and selected land in Crawford County, not far from Denison. This was not recorded until December 12, 1867, after Lincoln's death. The title passed from the Lincoln family March 22, 1892. Lincoln had not filed a warrant because he said he was "too poor to pay taxes on land" if he had it.

The Agricultural and Improvement of Stock Society took over the old fairgrounds in March of 1887, buying the grounds and buildings for $1,025. During the following years they gave the county some fine fairs, but they, too,

concluded there was too much competition for fairs and sold the grounds and building at auction in 1899.

Denison continued to prosper. The sidewalks on the east side of Main Street, that had stood high above the roadway, were lowered and the store fronts re-arranged. In 1887 a small library building, McKim Hall, was erected after other donations had been added to Mrs. Mary McKim's initial gift of $8,500. A fire company and a police force were organized, and two bands provided music for the townspeople when they congregated in public meetings or strolled along the downtown streets on Saturday nights. A baseball club, semiprofessional, was backed by the business men, some of whom played on the team.

By 1883, the McHenry stock farm at the edge of Denison was well established. William McHenry, its owner, was associated with his brother, Morris, in the McHenry Bank at Denison, but stock farming was one of his chief interests. In May of that year he bought his first four purebred Aberdeen Angus cows and started the famous herd that in time made Denison known all over the United States.

Flood and fire caused disasters at Denison that were not forgotten for many years. In June, 1885, both the East and West Boyers overflowed their banks so suddenly that several farmers were cut off from their homes. About three o'clock one afternoon four teams, guided by a man on horseback, attempted to pass over the small bridge that had to be reached. The first three wagons crossed the small bridge in safety though high water was running across the road, but Blackman's wagon, the last one, missed the bridge and in a moment the wagon, team, and occupants were submerged.

A young man named Angel, who was on horseback, and Henry Glau, a farmer crossing the bridge on his way to town, attempted to rescue the people from the wagon box, which had temporarily caught on a barbwire fence. Angel fell from his horse and was drowned. Glau swam to the wagon box, took the Nagel boy in his arms, and tried to reach shore but both man and boy were lost in the flood. Mr. and Mrs. Blackman and their son floated downstream. Blackman and the boy managed to catch the branches of a boxelder tree and climb into it, but Mrs. Blackman was carried with the flood for more than a half a mile. Men who heard the cries rushed from Denison, a good half-mile away, and managed to rescue the Blackmans.

Soon after the close of the evening service at the Baptist Church on February 14, 1886, the Reverend Avery opened the basement door and found the basement a sheet of

flames. People rushed from all over town to help the firemen, but nothing could be done beyond saving the parsonage. Most of the people in town, attracted by the flare in the sky, gathered to watch the flames destroy the building. It was the largest fire Denison had ever had.

In January 1888, people over the entire county mourned the death of A. D. Malony, the only auditor the county had ever had. He had been appointed clerk in 1861, and had served as clerk and auditor from 1874 until the time of his death. People came from all over the county to his funeral, and he was widely remembered for his long record of service.

Denison enjoyed a pleasant era in the 1890's. In June the "Log Rollers" of the Woodmen of the World enlivened the town with convention programs. In July 1890, Civil War veterans gathered from several counties for a gala celebration at Denison and, in the next month, Mrs. W. A. McHenry was elected the National President of the Women's Relief Corps, a patriotic organization that was one of the largest women's federations in the world. Three banks gave an air of prosperity to the business district and, encouraged by the growth of dairying, a new creamery opened. In time it developed into the Fairmont Creamery Company.

Progressive and prosperous though Denison was, the record of her fairs is discouraging, though the county fair in 1891 drew the largest attendance it had ever had. The Iowa State band was there, and premiums were given for baseball, football, foot races, and standing jumps. The fat man's race was enjoyed heartily. The exhibitions were interesting. But the fairs were not so well attended in the following years. In 1895 the fair association had an especially bad time. The fairground buildings were demolished when a cyclone struck the county; the weather was hot with high winds and dust; and cholera, then prevalent in the county, prevented the showing of hogs. A few years later the fairs were discontinued altogether.

Denison's post office was moved from place to place until 1892. The grounds of the old Germania Opera House were then purchased with a Federal appropriation and Congress authorized the erection of a $60,000 Federal building. The old Germania building was then bought by the Masonic order of Denison, moved half a block away, and remodeled. Rural free delivery was established after the Federal building had been completed.

The affairs of Denison continued to go well. New buildings were erected and the paper boasted that every working man had a job. An electric light plant, built in 1894, pumped water for the town and furnished current for 20 arc lights about the town. A fine city hall was erected

in 1896 and the first local telephone exchange, putting phones into a number of homes, was installed in 1897.

It was during this decade that Leslie M. Shaw came into national prominence. In 1895 Shaw was a successful Denison lawyer, superintendent of the large Methodist Sunday School, promotor of the Denison Normal School, and much interested in helping young people get a good start in life. He had come to Iowa as a young man and peddled apple trees to get money to attend Cornell College. When he was ready to go to school, he walked into a grocery store at Manchester, Iowa, bought ten cents worth of crackers and cheese to eat on the way and walked 45 miles to Mount Vernon to save the fare. After his legal education, he settled at Denison and took an active part in the town's affairs. He heard William Jennings Bryan, then editor of the Omaha World Herald, champion the cause of "free silver."

Shaw disagreed with his ideas of bimetalism and made a local speech refuting the issues. This speech was so well accepted that he was asked to repeat it in various other communities. Then in 1896 he offered to serve in the Republican party campaign. The issue was again "free silver", for Bryan had been nominated for president when he captured the National Democratic convention with his famous "cross of gold" speech, and bimetalism had been written into the party platform. Shaw, because he was new at the game of politics, asked to be sent to the out-of-the-way towns in Iowa. His speeches there were well received, and people liked him.

In 1897 the Republican state convention nominated Shaw as candidate for governor. Teams and excursion trains carried several thousand people into the town to see the ratification ceremonies at which Shaw accepted the candidacy. A few days later the Democrats, not to be outdone, presented the Hon. William Jennings Bryan as speaker and the town was again crowded with people who wanted to see the famous champion of free silver. The following year practically the whole town attended the farewell reception which the Methodist Sunday School gave to Governor-elect Shaw, and he left Denison, expecting to return to the little town. Another life was in store for him, however. After serving two terms as Governor of Iowa, he returned to Denison a short time, and then accepted the post as Secretary of the Treasury in President Theodore Roosevelt's cabinet. Later he became president of the Carnegie Trust Company in New York City.

During 1898, the year of the Spanish-American War, four newspapers were published at Denison -- the Bulletin, the Review, Die Zeitung, and Der Demokrat.

In 1899, when the Illinois Central extended its line from Fort Dodge through Denison to Council Bluffs, and the

Northwestern reached northwest from Denison to Wall Lake, between twenty and thirty trains a day passed through the county seat. Both the Illinois Central and the Northwestern built large depots at Denison. When the Illinois Central began its regular train service through the county on December 5, 1899, bonds had been voted for a fine new high school building, and the German Methodists were erecting a new church.

Many things that Denison people accepted as a matter of course in 1941 came into existence in the period between 1900 and 1920. When Denison celebrated the arrival of a new century and a new year in 1900, there were no automobiles, no paved streets, no general use of electricity or telephones, no Carnegie library, no movies, no adequate courthouse, no modern business district, and no city mail delivery. The first wooden porches and awnings were not removed from the business buildings until the spring of 1900, the year when the electric light company began its all night service. Before that time, the lights went out at midnight and could not be used again until the power-house was opened the next morning. The Northwestern had prospered enough by then to double-track its main line, and give the community increased service.

In 1900, one of Denison's residents, J. P. Conner, was chosen in a special election to represent the Tenth district of Iowa in Congress. Connor served as United States Representative for a number of terms.

The town struggled along with a makeshift library until 1901 when a donation of $1,500 to the library fund gave Denison leaders the idea of asking Andrew Carnegie for help. The trustees of the Carnegie fund agreed to give Denison $10,000 if $2,500 was raised by popular subscription. When J. P. Miller donated a corner lot for a library site and $1,000, the local subscription was completed. Then the appropriation from Andrew Carnegie was made available as soon as the town provided an annual tax of one-tenth of that amount toward the library's maintenance. Attempts to secure a library had begun in 1874 when J. Fred Meyers, then a newcomer to the town, urged the establishment of a free public library. The library association formed at that time presented a series of amateur theatricals and entertainments to secure the first small library, established in connection with the school library. The next year electors in Hanover and Denison townships approved a property tax to raise $500 for a district library, and a committee was appointed to select the books. In 1876, 80 volumes were purchased and kept at the Carr drug store.

When Mrs. Mary A. McKim died in February 1885, she left a sum for the erection of a small library building, and

McKim Hall, a small two-story brick building, was put up. The school and city libraries moved into it in 1887. In 1901 George W. Schee of Primghar, Iowa, promised to give the city $1,500 for library books, providing the city furnished $2,500. Enterprising citizens soon raised the required money, but the problem of housing the library arose since McKim Hall was no longer large enough. It was then that the appeal was made to Andrew Carnegie.

The library, dedicated in 1904, soon became the center of the town's social and literary life. Various literary clubs of the city held meetings in the basement, and the reading room with its many periodicals and newspapers was widely used. In 1941 the library had about 30,000 volumes.

In 1903 work on the $75,000 sewer system, bonded the year before, began and the telephone exchange extended its lines into the rural areas so that the people could talk with their relatives and friends in the country. County voters had accepted a $75,000 bond issue for a new courthouse, and hundreds came to town to see the old building auctioned off. To top off the year, President Theodore Roosevelt, in company with Secretary Shaw, visited the town in June.

Tuesday, June 2, 1903, was "President's Day" at Denison. When the presidential train arrived on the Illinois Central road at six o'clock in the morning, special excursion trains were arriving every few minutes. Mud-spattered horses and wagons that had come through the rain-soaked roads from every direction lined the streets, while the country people and the townspeople flocked to the station for a glimpse of the President before his ride through the town. The drizzle of the three previous days continued as his train was backed into the depot at 8:30 and he made his way to the landau waiting for him.

The Sioux City National Guard formed the military escort as Teddy, with Secretary Shaw at his side, was driven through the muddy streets. At the schoolhouse he greeted the children who were lined up outside waiting for him. Five brass bands augmented the noisy enthusiasm. Back at the station again, Roosevelt mounted the platform that had been erected beside the building, to speak to the throng of 8,000 people gathered there. Before he had said half a dozen words, someone in the crowd freed a number of white doves that flew toward the President and hovered near him for a moment. The President smiled his famous smile, bowed to the people, and began to deliver his address on good government. The local papers of the town stated that 20,000 would have flocked to the town instead of the eight or more thousand, had they been able to get through the muddy roads, then almost impassable.

An editorial in the Denison Bulletin on June 4, 1903, however, criticized the President's visit rather scathingly. "What impressions has President Roosevelt left on those who saw him here?" it asked.

"...On the whole they are not very flattering...It is our own impression and that of very many others with whom we have talked that President Roosevelt has suffered in the public estimation by his visit to Denison..."

"Robust, rugged, tanned, height five feet, eight inches, not too fat, muscled like an ox, head as knob-like and stubborn as a prize fighter, upper and lower teeth as white as ivory and showing as he talks and smiles like the grinders of a savage, President Roosevelt is not a handsome man by any means...

"President Roosevelt's voice is rather high and a little rasping...When speaking he hesitates, stutters somewhat, and delays for words to express himself...The most ordinary stump speaker that has appeared in Denison would not suffer by comparison with him.

"Roosevelt is picturesque, he is courageous, he is strong, he is wilful, but he is not the sort of man the masses would be likely to pick up for President had not the accidental death of President McKinley given him the prestige of already holding that position at this time."

The Bulletin erred, however, in judging the peoples' will. Theodore Roosevelt was re-elected in 1904.

When the first automobile went through Denison in June, 1904, the townspeople little guessed that E. C. Chamberlin, father of the later famous flyer, would be driving an auto of his own about the town before the year was over, or that in the space of the next half dozen years autos would be so common in the county that farmers and townspeople would hold an automobile protest meeting. More and more townspeople bought autos and drove them through the county until a good number of people met at the city hall in July of 1906 to protest the use of automobiles. The newspaper, in reporting this meeting, facetiously suggested that auto drivers be restricted to certain highways in the county and that farmers bring their horses to a certain designated place so that they could get used to the machines. About this time an autoist was fined for running over a goose on a public highway, but no mention was made of the fact that the goose had no right on the public highway.

Two of Denison's public buildings were dedicated in 1904. Ceremonies were held at the new Carnegie Library in August, and the cornerstone of the new courthouse was laid

during the summer. It is hard to remember today the color and brightness of town scenes such as these, but there were canes, and high hats and bright parasols, and the ladies wore high pompadours. We know that during these years the town merchants sponsored street fairs, and beauty queens were chosen and crowned. Each town had its Maid of Honor by popular vote, and the Queen of the Carnival was chosen from among them. Perhaps the carnival queen led the "fashion parade" then, as later motion picture heroines were to do.

During these years Denison was a politically important town. When Senator Fairbanks of Indiana was campaigning for the vice-presidency in October 1904, he stopped at Denison for a brief visit. A crowd of 2,500 people greeted the candidate as his train halted at the Illinois Central depot. Governor Cummins of Iowa accompanied him to the speaker's stand nearby, and he spoke to the crowd.

Denison was an ambitious town. Its citizens wanted a new hotel, a gas plant, a hospital. And they wanted an opera house. These things all materialized within the next few years. In July 1904, records were moved into the new courthouse, and officials exhibited their new offices to all visitors. In the fall, people of Denison drove over to Arion to attend the county fair instead of walking to the old fairgrounds just outside of Denison. It was during that fall that the rural free delivery service of the county was reorganized and a seventh rural route from Denison established.

The next year, in June, postal receipts at Denison exceeded $10,000, and the town became entitled to free city delivery. Denison was districted, the houses numbered, and competitive examinations given for carriers. In 1908 four postmen started the free delivery service.

From 1907 to 1911 Denison was an enthusiastic Chautauqua town. During Chautauqua week the townspeople thought of nothing else, but planned their days to participate in as much of the Chautauqua activity as possible. Movies were added to the entertainment field in Denison the same year that the first Chautauqua came. In November, 1907, Moenck and Bond, managers of the Electric Theater, started to show pictures. The Denison Bulletin remarked, "The managers of the show were a little disappointed at the start in some of their apparatus failing to work properly, but they secured a new lantern which throws elegant moving pictures of which they exhibit a variety at every entertainment. The same lantern throws the stationary pictures for the illustrated song which are making a hit... The pictures are quite an attraction every evening and the enterprise is enjoying a good patronage..."

Baseball took up a generous share of the county's spare hours. The Denison team was semi-professional, but most of the players were men who waited on the townspeople in stores or helped them deposit their money at the bank. In the summer time, the team's chances of "whitewashing" every other team in the county was a favorite topic of discussion.

The many Germans in the county gathered on October 6, 1909 in commemoration of the day in 1623 when the first German immigrants arrived in the United States. The year before, the Landwehrverein had been organized by the German men who had served in the army of the Fatherland and had received honorable discharge. This organization was affiliated with the Westliche Kriegerbund, an association that had 26 lodges. At one time it had a membership of 110. The German Brotherhood, organized in the 1880's, welcomed all those of German descent into their organization, and probably sponsored the German Day celebration.

As the years passed there were fewer and fewer of the old settlers to join in the celebrations and to plan for civic improvements. In 1911, Morris McHenry, one of the pioneers who had done much to foster the well-being of the town, died. In this year, too, a scarlet fever epidemic closed the schools and all public assemblies were forbidden.

From its inception the Denison Chamber of Commerce was alert to new ideas. It was one of the first in the State to promote the idea of a maintained all-weather highway across the State from Clinton to Council Bluffs, in 1911. Motorists passing through the town commented on its park-like appearance as they drove along the shady streets lined with substantial residences and passed through the clean-looking business district. By 1917 the streets were paved, and the transcontinental Lincoln Highway passed through and brought scores of motorists.

May 18, 1914, saw the formal opening of the Denison Opera House with the presentation by a traveling stock company of "The Ghost Breaker." The building, a commodious structure costing $84,000, was financed by a company of 125 stockholders. Two stores on the main floor and offices on the second floor brought in steady rentals. For years the auditorium supplied the community with entertainment in various forms, but chiefly along the line of comedies by a stock company and the best available grade of motion pictures.

In 1917 the old Denison Normal and Business College closed, and the Denison School Board, to relieve congestion in the schools, purchased the buildings and ground. Normal and business courses were continued as part of the high

school course, and the old high school building became a grade school.

On November 11, 1920, a monument honoring the World War dead was unveiled on its site on the Lincoln Highway near the Denison Opera House. Spectators saw the figure of a khaki-clad soldier on a tall marble base on which was inscribed the names of those who had died in service.

People in the town were beginning to be air-minded by 1927. One of the boys who had grown up in Denison was as familiar with an airplane as his father was with a car, and on June 4, 1927 the whole county was wondering whether Clarence D. Chamberlin of Denison would make his flight across the Atlantic Ocean safely. They rejoiced when he landed with his one passenger at Eisleben, Germany, on June 5. By 1941 two men in the county owned their own planes, Art Frahm and Bryan Weberg. The latter had his own landing field on his farm near Denison.

A new high school gymnasium was the pride of the town in 1927, and it was followed three years later by a fine school athletic field and a municipal plunge. The latter project was sponsored by the firemen and carried out by public subscription. Athletics had long been popular, and the athletic field was equipped with a good quarter mile track, and floodlights for night games. Tennis courts both at the high school and elsewhere were seldom idle.

Public school pupils enjoyed only one week's vacation at Christmas time in 1936, but they got the rest of it in February 1937, when they moved into the new $135,000 high school and left the old one (the former Normal and Business College) vacant. It stood in 1941 a lonely, dead-looking building on the hill.

With the coming of the second World War, Crawford County welcomed its opportunity to participate in the defense effort. On October 16, 1940, 2,337 men registered for selective service training at the county draft board, which was organized with Carl B. Richardson as chairman. When the national draft lottery was held on November 4, Ralph Kingdon McKee of Dow City became the first in line for induction, with Number 158. However, six men had volunteered for service in the meantime and the county's first quota of two men was filled by Elmer Bachmann of Denison, and Roy Carl Larson of Deloit. Late in November the Denison Kiwanis Club staged a special supper in honor of these two men, then off they went for a year of "beans and sowbelly, squads right and squads left." But in the summer of 1941 their year of service was lengthened by an act of Congress.

Late in the summer of 1941 a conscientious objectors' camp was established at Denison in the old CCC camp to house objectors from Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. A central committee of the Mennonite Church, whose peace-loving beliefs motivated many of the men objecting to military service, assumed management of the camp. This denomination always regarded war and all forms of physical conflict as directly opposed to the basic religious and human tenet, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." These draftees did not, however, object to their share of work in making their country strong and self-sustaining. At Denison they settled down to spend their hours in contour plowing, fence relocation, tree-planting, ditching and other work under the direction of the soil conservation service. The Federal Government furnished the camp and equipment, but the camp officers' salaries were paid by the Mennonite organization.

And Denison made the camp welcome because its activities would improve the land. This was as it should be in an agricultural county, rich in understanding of the value of the brown earth and its blossoming.